

Come, Lord Jesus – make these words your Word, that our hearts may become your heart. Amen.

What a chain reaction we see in our gospel story this week!

John the Baptist points out Jesus as the Lamb of God.

Andrew says, "Where?" and goes to check him out.

Convinced he's the Real Deal, Andrew finds his brother Simon and tells him,
"We have found the Messiah!"

Andrew and Simon tell Philip, who comes and sees.

Jesus says to him, "Follow me."

Philip doesn't keep the news to himself –

he goes and finds his friend Nathanael, and tells him: "Come and see."

When Nathanael meets Jesus, soon he is proclaiming, "You are the Son of God."

What do you do when you're excited about something – when something amazing

has happened? When you've met someone, found something precious?

A new job; new love; new grandchild; a miraculous escape; an amazing gift...

Most of us can't wait to tell someone. Sometimes everyone!

When we see God doing amazing things, when we've found something we've
been looking for, we usually have to share it. We can't keep it in.

So how has this Good News of God's power and love for us in Jesus Christ,
become so ho-hum, so domesticated,

that we have no problem at all keeping it to ourselves?

Has it gotten too old, too stale, too complicated to talk about?

Is the cognitive dissonance between what we proclaim and
what we see in the world too great?

Well, friends, cognitive dissonance is where we live as people of faith.

Faith is the vision to see what is not yet in the midst of the already.

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If we let our news feeds dictate how we feel, we've already lost.

We have another story, running alongside, through, under and over that story.

And this is a story of a God whose love does not quit,

who works through us to bring amazing healing and reconciliation.

We've encountered that God, I believe, or we wouldn't be here.

That God invites us to expect blessing, to be people of expectation.
We don't get to write the script, but we are to expect that the One who is in the
business of blessing wants to bring blessings to our world every day. And does.
We need to train our eyes to see it.
We need to train our minds to expect it.
We need to train our hearts to receive it.
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Honing the spiritual discipline of expecting blessing is how I got through 2020,
that year when one horrible thing was thrown up after another.
It wasn't the pandemic that terrified me;
it was resurgence of visible racism, and the election.
And here we are again, with dark forces on the move in our world and nation,
wars and slaughter fed by nationalism on the rise; poverty increasing.
It's so easy to hide in fear, to calibrate our expectations down to nothing.
Have we forgotten this promise, "You will see greater things than these?"
When Nathanael thinks he's seen God's glory visible in Jesus, Jesus says,
"You ain't seen nothing yet, my friend. You're going to see greater things than that."
Heaven is now open; through me you will have access to the power of God,
the love of God, the person of God. We will see "greater things than these."

As followers of Jesus, we need to believe "greater things than these."
We need to take the lead in believing in "greater things than these."
We need to see unexpected peace and blessing in the face of threats
to our democratic system of government by those who can't conceive
of losing an election, who foment hatred toward anyone they see as different.
We need to see unexpected peace and blessing in the face of the fearsome
persistence of white supremacy woven into our economic and judicial systems,
which denies equality to people of color and indigenous citizens.

This weekend we lift up the legacy of a man who knew how to say,
"Here I am. Speak, Lord, your servant is listening,"
a man whom many consider a saint and a prophet for our time.
The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., persisted in proclaiming justice and honor
in the face of fire hoses and death threats, beatings and betrayals.
But he didn't just believe in "good news" in the abstract –
he lived in relationship with the Good News himself, our Lord Jesus.
He followed Jesus into those streets of battle and halls of power.

He allowed Jesus to transform his life as he allied himself with God's mission of justice. He gave voice to God's dream, and allowed God's dream to claim him, to take priority over other dreams he may have had for his own life and safety. Martin Luther King, Jr. had vision to see what many did not think was even possible. *"I have a dream,"* he preached. ... *deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal".*¹

King believed in greater things though nothing around him suggested that could be. And because he believed and worked and allied himself with the power of God and not the power of human greed, he moved this country toward a vision of racial equality. Laws were enacted, policies changed, consciences awakened, social mores and even hiring patterns altered... somewhat. We even elected a president born of a white American and a black African. Twice. Because of King, evil that had been accepted as natural or inevitable was seen for what it was. It's still with us, and we're still too complacent, but we know it is evil.

Some think it's also inevitable, that racism is so woven into our national character it cannot be rooted out – after all, the compromise that allowed for our initial union was based on perpetuating chattel slavery. Much of the wealth in this country was generated through taking land and enslaved labor.

But we are invited to exercise our faith in the God of greater things. Jesus says, "Take me at my word! Heaven is open.

God's power is still real and active in the world."

Martin Luther King, Jr. knew he could not do this work alone – and he knew the power of God working through him could do all things.

Working for justice means allying ourselves with the power of God who wants justice, letting the Spirit work through us.

When we do nothing, we ally ourselves with the forces of greed and discrimination.

What might Christ Church do this year to ally ourselves with God in the area of racial justice? One of our missional goals is promoting equity and justice through our participation and resources – where does racial justice come in? Our Diocese is deeply engaged in exploring how we might go about making reparations, as the Diocese of Maryland and many other institutions are doing.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" Speech, delivered 28 August 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C. Read or hear it in its entirety at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihavedream.htm>

Reparations in this context is not about trying to compensate individuals for evils done, which could never be compensated at any price. Reparations can be investment to level an unjust, inequitable playing field. The Diocese of Maryland, which is already making grants out of its \$1 million reparations fund frames this work as a way to *“help repair the lack of resources in communities of color in need and to repair our relationships with these communities.”*

The working definition of reparations in the Diocese of Washington is: *... the spiritual and material process to remember, restore, reconcile, and make amends for historical and continuing wrongs against humanity that can never be singularly reducible to monetary terms, but must include a substantial investment and surrender of resources.*² Check out the Reparations page on the EDOW website. Might we form a team to explore how and where we will fit in to this work? Or at least how we engage the conversation?

I have a dream for us to develop a Day of Repentance and Healing at Port Tobacco, in concert with other local organizations like the College of Southern Maryland, Port Tobacco Players, the NAACP, Interfaith Commission. There was a lively slave trade in Charles County; both our churches were built with resources generated by tobacco farming, using enslaved labor. We could be leaders in lifting the conversation up. Trinity St. Mary's has developed such an event with the College of St. Mary's – I've started a conversation with them to see how we might participate here. Let me know if this is something that interests you.

Faith is the vision to see what is not yet in the midst of the already. And as we dare to dream of God's vision; as we exercise faith and see God's greater and greater things, we will tell the stories to others so they too will exercise faith, and they will see greater and greater things, and tell the stories, and this Jesus movement will grow until this weekly reunion and celebration of what God is up to is packed with people with stories to tell.

Amen! Let it be so.

² <https://edow.org/ministries-programs/equity-and-justice/reparations/>

John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Psalm 139