

SERMON  
Delivered 1/15/2023  
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Let the words of my mouth and the mediation of my heart, be acceptable to you O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Good morning! and welcome to the Second Sunday in Epiphany season and Martin Luther King Day weekend.

The Gospel lesson from John for today picks up from the prologue and contributes to the theme that Jesus is the Son of God and that by believing and acting on that belief we have eternal life.

In the Gospel story, we move on from the Baptism by John that was last week's lesson (the first common story in all the Gospels), and we begin Jesus' adult ministry. In other Gospels, Jesus goes immediately from baptism into the desert, which is a focus of Lenten scriptures.

Being Epiphany season, today we focus on Jesus' mission and God's revelation to the world in John's Gospel. In today's Gospel, Jesus also calls his first disciples into his mission.

Some in this parish support missionaries in one way or another. In particular, some people support medical missionaries in one way or another.

For those knowledgeable in the matters of medical missions or missions in general, what are you aware of that missionaries do? I was a foreign missionary, so I have some idea. However, this is not a trick question. I am interested in what you might know that people do in foreign missions.

(responses: preaching, prayer)

An interesting thing about missions, whether to people in the United States or elsewhere in the world. For some people, sometimes it's hard to see what to do for mission "across the street" until you have participated in missions somewhere else in the world. It seems counterintuitive, perhaps.

And if you have traveled internationally, you may have come home or come to this country with new eyes to see your surroundings. I think that is what may be happening.

This week, it occurred to me, perhaps as one of God's object lessons for this sermon, that while I may not be a foreign missionary at this point in my life, what I do in terms of provision or medical matters for family members is similar to what I might do for someone in another country as a missionary. That, in fact, by doing so for a family member, I could be a kind of medical missionary to family members. That gave me a whole new level of insight as to perhaps how I might be engaging with my family. What might God be doing in our midst as a way of ministering to each other on the path of eternal life with God? Whether locally or globally, it is a team effort, that is one reason to support global and local mission work, that we might play a part on the path of eternal life with others, wherever they might be, geographically.

And as the recent Artemis I mission to the moon seemed to point out, when earth is seen from the moon, the distance from here to Nigeria, for example, is very small. And in one sense that might be how God views our distances and God's mission. Distance may be a matter of perspective.

Perhaps like an interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan or as I might minister to a person in need elsewhere in the world, I might be Christ to a person in my family or a friend, ministering to a person who happens to be a member of my family or might happen to be a neighbor on the street.

"Who is my neighbor?" You might ask. That was asked of Jesus that led to the parable of the Good Samaritan. Perhaps that someone may be similar or dissimilar to ourselves, in some way.

In any case, how might what I do, be similar to the purpose of the Gospel of John, that the story of life in which I am engaged, is experienced so that the other person may know that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing and acting on that belief we both may have eternal life.

What actions, words, and deeds might I do that might draw that person into the life that the Holy Trinity has in mind for the person? For example, how (as a medical missionary, whether overseas, or running an errand to a

pharmacy for a family member) might my action be part of that Gospel purpose for both of us, leading us both down the path of eternal life?

Or, how might an unemployed relative who is looking for a job and living at home with me, be like a homeless person elsewhere in the world, at this point in their lives? How might our story together be part of the Gospel purpose, on the path of eternal life?

Perhaps we have to travel elsewhere, also, to see what is on our plate, as part of God's mission of our lives.

So, my voluntary assignment for today: perhaps pray and think of one way this week that you might be a foreign missionary, or a missionary to the people around you, that by participating in that story with another person, you are walking alongside that person with the goal of you both sharing in eternal life with God.

A prayer:

Heavenly Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would show us one way this week that we might walk alongside someone, helping them walk on the path of eternal life with us, that all would be done in your way, in your time, and to your glory. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.