

Second Sunday after the Epiphany
Saint Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas
18 January 2026

John 1:29-42

Today we enter fully into a season of Ordinal/Ordinary time we call, “After Epiphany.” The season is composed of a number of weeks that follow the Baptism of Jesus, which we celebrated last week, and lead us directly into the season of Lent. During Epiphany, God revealed his Son to the nations through the Magi. At his baptism, Matthew revealed how Jesus is the one who will fulfil Isaiah’s Suffering Servant announcements. He did this by opening the section (4:4) with the same words Isaiah used to introduce the Suffering Servant at 42:1. During the Sundays that follow, the scriptures will unveil a bit more of the Messiah’s identity each Sunday (as if pulling a sheet covering a valuable object to let us see what it looks like): who he is, his mission to Israel and the nations, the type of movement he is creating, and ways he fulfils scripture. Today in the Gospel of John we have four new titles that reveal something important about Jesus. Two of these titles come from John the Baptist and the other two come from Andrew, one of John’s disciples who becomes a disciple of Jesus. Let us set the stage.

A few verses before this passage, the Pharisees ask John, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us?” Particularly, they want to know if he is the Messiah, the prophet Elijah, or the Prophet (whatever this might mean). He quotes Isaiah, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” (1:20-23). He adds that one is coming whose sandals he is not worthy to untie. The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and exclaims, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ... I came baptizing with water... that he might be revealed to Israel.”

In John, Jesus is not baptized, the spirit does not publicly testify about him as in the synoptics, and we have no information about any connection between the Baptist and Jesus. In fact, John states, “I did not know he was the Messiah, but I came so that he might be revealed.” John narrates a vision in which he saw the Holy Spirit tell him how to identify the Messiah, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.” Then the spirit stated, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” After this vision John becomes convinced that Jesus is “the Chosen one.”

So far, John has given us two titles for Jesus, “Lamb of God” and “Son of God” (1:32). The next day, John repeats one of these titles. He says, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” This expression points directly to the Passover Lamb of Exodus 12, which was not a lamb killed for the forgiveness of sins, but rather a lamb eaten at a special meal on the eve before God sent his last plague to Egypt. The people were to smear the blood of this lamb over the entrance of their homes, ensuring that the Angel of God would pass over their homes as it killed the first-born humans and animals from Egypt. It is this last plague that convinced the Egyptians to let God’s people go. Now, John is saying that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

The image would have also brought to mind the sacrificial lamb of Abraham’s story in Genesis 22. When God spares Isaac’s life, “Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son,” (22:13). It also brought to mind the portion of the Suffering Servant song of Isaiah where it says, “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” (53:7b). So, the image of “Lamb of God” points to passages that point to Jesus’ future vocation. He will be the Suffering Messiah of Isaiah, the Passover Lamb that will lead to freedom, and the lamb of sacrifice.”

The other name for Jesus early in the Gospel of John comes from verse 14 of his prologue, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” It also comes from verse 32, where John recalls the vision from the angel that convinced him Jesus was the chosen one. The Gospel goes beyond the image that Jesus is a son, however. To be the Son of God is to be God. This is what the prologue has told us. Jesus is not someone God sent into the world to do his bidding. Jesus is God. God sent himself into the world. We see this in the numerous times Jesus uses the name of God in Exodus. That name is “I am” and Jesus uses it seven times in the Gospel of John. He says, “I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the door of the sheep. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the good shepherd. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the true vine.” This is an important affirmation that led two of John’s disciples to leave him and to follow Jesus.

Jesus asks the two disciples, “What are you looking for?” These are the first words of Jesus in the Gospel of John, and I believe this is a powerful question that still resonates today. What are we looking for? What did we come here to see? What do we hope to find? The disciples then ask, “Rabbi” “where are you staying?” Jesus does not answer the question but issues an invitation as important today as it was then, “Come and see.” This word “Rabbi” is the third title or name revealed to us today. To call Jesus a Rabbi is to acknowledge that he is a teacher

and to state a desire to learn from him. Jesus will in fact teach. In the Gospel of John the Messiah is constantly teaching. But we see something different here as well. Jesus invites the disciples to come and see. This is not passive learning, but participatory learning. Jesus is inviting them into a way of life, a new way of being, a new vocation. Jesus is saying “come and abide with me, live with me, experience life with me, watch me do and then tell others about me,” which is exactly what Andrew does. He goes and tells Peter about Jesus. Peter leaves everything behind to come and see. “Come and see” is an invitation to witness and to join in what Jesus is doing. It is a vocational invitation to participate in the messiah’s mission. It is our vocation as disciples of Jesus. What would happen if we issue that invitation to anyone we meet? How would the Church be different? How would the world be better?

The last title for Jesus this passage unveils is “Messiah” which again comes from Andrew. He tells Peter, “We have found the Messiah.” Although this title has been given to kings, high priests, and even some prophets, since returning from the Babylonian captivity many prophets had announced the coming of an “Anointed one” who would be an heir of David and who would liberate the nation from foreign rule. This Messiah would gather the scattered nation of Israel and would usher a time of justice and prosperity. Although many expected a military hero, John gives us early signs of the type of Messiah Jesus will be. The close association to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and the “Lamb of God” Passover symbolism point to the type of Messiah Jesus will be.

To summarize, John tells us today that Jesus is God (Son of God), he is the Lamb of God, he is a Rabbi, and he is the Messiah. Four different titles the Gospel will use throughout the book. But I want to leave us with Jesus’ question, which can be asked in several ways, “What do you want?” or “What are you looking for?” or “What did you come here to see?” If you are looking for God and intend to abide in God’s presence, then you are in the right place. If you intend to come and see and then leave to give testimony about what you have seen and experienced, then you are in the right place. If you have come to learn from a Rabbi who invites you to participate, to enter into his story, and to let the story transform your life from the inside out, then you are in the right place. If you are here to meet the Messiah because you know that there is salvation in no one else, then you are in the right place. All other reasons need to be examined carefully.

May God continue to give you a deep hunger and thirst for His Son. Amen!