

Coming through the Holy Places



Sometimes a place feels holy because of rich cultural history, or it is built and adorned to inspire praise. But can people make places feel holy just by offering simple kindness? This week we see that it is often the people in a place that imbue it with holiness when they speak the truth in love.

Focus scripture: Mark 1:21–28

In Mark 1:21–28, Jesus shows up in a surprising way – as a teacher with a difference. The scribes of the day gathered their teaching skills through scholarship, knowledge, and studying precedence. Mark presents Jesus as one who teaches with the independent authority of God and the backing of his deeds. Jesus demonstrated a divine authority that had not been seen before and was perceived as a threat to the scribes. Jesus' treatment of the ill was amazing. His actions disrupted social norms. Social, political, and religious authorities came to view Jesus as a blasphemer and revolutionary.

The exorcism seems of secondary importance in this story. Jesus has the divine authority to drive out the unclean spirit living in the person he encountered in the synagogue – whatever the unclean spirit is. The healing amazed people who saw what happened, but they were more amazed by the authority with which Jesus acted.

When we think of a prophet, we might think of a person with special powers to see the future and predict what will occur in our lives. **Deuteronomy 18:15–20** describes one prophet in particular, “like you from among their own people...” This person is not charged with fortune-telling but instead is empowered to support the exhausted preachers as they continue their work among a disengaged assembly. A prophet will speak God's words in God's name, and God will hold everyone accountable. God's word can show up in surprising ways if that is what we need.

Epiphany can happen anywhere to anyone. **Psalm 111** lists the miraculous ways God shows up in the way we are nourished, the way we understand our cultural heritage, and the way we act justly toward one another in community.

This psalm informs our reading of **1 Corinthians 8:1–13**. If we come to the study of idolatry with compassion for those who are weak, then we become better friends and followers of Christ. The epistle explains that knowing right from wrong is not as important as knowing how to care for one another. Paul begs us not to wound one another with quick wit. He had personal experience with enforcing the spiritual law he studied before his conversion. He teaches the church in Corinth that they may feel tempted to outsmart each other. As we experience the fullness of love through the ways God provides for all of us, we learn to depend on one another so we may see God in new places and new people.

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Prophecy, blessings, conversions, and teaching can occur on street corners, prisons, and shantytowns just as often as they occur in synagogues, temples, and chapels. Epiphany is not always a matter of where we encounter God; it may be a question of who journeys with us as we come through the holy places. Which begs the question, how are we a part of the holy places? Do we carry them within ourselves? What if the holiest places are not a church or cathedral but carried in our hearts and minds?

Focus scripture

Mark 1:21–28

Additional scriptures

Deuteronomy 18:15–20

Psalm 111

1 Corinthians 8:1–13

God of hearts and homes, be with us and within us so we may know the holiness of each person and place we encounter. Amen.

Lecture Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

When young children are feeling ill or lonely, they know what a difference it makes to have someone to love and care for them during that time. Sometimes all that is needed is a special hug to help them feel better. In this week's story about Jesus, they will hear about someone who needed help and they will hear how Jesus offered love and care, the way a parent might offer that love and care. Young children are concrete thinkers and at the beginning of the session there is an opportunity for them to participate in a game with magnets, which can help them visualize how people were drawn to Jesus. Pray that the children

will experience Jesus as the loving one whose teaching and healing ways help to bring people together.

Note: This week is the first in a two-week series of stories about people who were healed by Jesus. Story figures for these two stories are provided on the [Storytelling Poster](#) and instructions for preparing the figures are on the resource sheet "[Resources for the Season after the Epiphany](#)" (p. 79). Each story will use a group of figures, adding more and more people to a display of the gathering crowds around Jesus. Each week the children will choose one of these figures to be the lead character in that week's story.

Prepare

Before the session

- ☐ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Mark 1:21–28, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 57).
- ☐ Prepare a worship space with a green cloth, candle, matches, offering basket, Bible with a bookmark placed in the gospel of Mark.
- ☐ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), resource sheet "[Additional Songs](#)" (p. 76) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Music CD*, and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available for purchase at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ☐ Bring, if possible, "Circle Song" (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ☐ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).
- ☐ Bring a magnet, small metal objects, and a tray.

Engage

- ☐ Prepare figures and a space for using the "Storytelling figures" from the [Storytell-](#)

[ing Poster 3](#) (see instructions on resource sheet "[Resources for the Season after the Epiphany](#)," p. 79).

- ☐ Bring resource sheet "Jesus Cares" and eight of the storytelling figures from the poster (include one man).
- ☐ Bring, if possible, the song "Oh, Will You Follow Me" (p. 21 in *Seasons Growing Faith Songbook*, #14 on *Seasons Growing Faith Music CD*).

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ☐ **Story puppet:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Jesus Figure](#)," business-sized envelopes; cut out the figures of Jesus; seal the envelopes and cut off one of the narrow edges.
- ☐ **Hand bouquet:** construction paper, pipe cleaners, vase, glitter (optional)
- ☐ **Collage:** copies of resource sheet "[Jesus Figure](#)," construction paper, variety of people pictures from used magazines; cut out the figures of Jesus (one per child).

Bless

- ☐ Bring, if possible, the song "We Will Follow Jesus" (on resource sheet [Additional Songs](#), p. 76)



Scripture

Mark 1:21–28

January 31, 2021

Coming through the Holy Places

FOCUS To explore Jesus' teaching and healing ways, which bring people together

Gather

Welcome children by name.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship table and invite a child to help light the candle, a reminder that God is with us. Point to the Bible and explain that it is a special book with stories about what Jesus said and did to help share God's love in the world. Explain that this day we come together to sing and pray and learn how to live in God's way. Receive the offering.

Sing "God Is With Us" (see ["Additional Songs,"](#) p. 76) or "Circle Song" (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on the *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Pray Loving God,
we are here today to learn
more about your love for us.
Help us spread that love to others. Amen.

Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

- ☐ **Puppet conversation** (*Place the magnet and small metal objects on a tray nearby.*)

Priscilla: Hello everyone. Look what I have! (*Encourage children to play with the magnet and metal objects.*)

Leader: Wow! Magnets certainly have a lot of power. As soon as you put it near a metal object, the object moves!

Priscilla: Let's play a game and pretend to be magnets. Let's all tiptoe around the room and when I call your name you become a magnet and everyone else comes and sits at your feet. (*Play until everyone has had a chance to be a magnet.*)

Leader: That was fun. You know, in a way, Jesus was like a magnet. Wherever Jesus travelled, people wanted to get close to him. Let's hear a story about Jesus now. (*Place Priscilla nearby or have her say goodbye.*)

- ☐ **Magnet game** Play some music or clap hands as the children tiptoe around the room. Stop the music, call out a child's name and that child becomes a magnet. The rest of the children run to the "magnet" and sit at the child's feet. Repeat the game until everyone has been a magnet. Option: try different ways to move around the room (such as, hopping, sliding). Explain that in a way, Jesus was like a magnet. Wherever Jesus travelled, people wanted to get close to him.

Engage

Before the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of Mark. Mention that Mark was a follower of Jesus. Mark wrote down some stories about Jesus and about the times when Jesus helped people. Today's story is about a man who

was very lonely and needed a lot of care and love. Gather beside the display space (see [instructions](#) on p. 79) and invite children to choose one of the story figures to represent the lonely man. Use the resource sheet ["Jesus Cares"](#) to present the story.

After the story

When Jesus healed the man, Jesus helped him to become part of the community again. Comment that people feel better when someone reaches out to them in a loving way. Invite children to join hands in a circle and move around the room without releasing hands; work together to change

the shape of the circle so it fits through doors and around tables and other objects without letting go of hands.

Sing "We Will Follow Jesus" (see "[Additional Songs](#)," p. 76) or, if possible, "Oh, Will You Follow Me" (p. 21 in *SGF Songbook*, Vol. 7; #14 on *SGF Music CD*, Vol. 7).

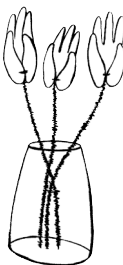
Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ☐ **Story puppet** Invite children to make a hand puppet to re-tell this week's Bible story. Give each child a figure of Jesus to colour. Help children to glue their figures onto a sealed envelope (open edge down) and show them how to insert their hands into the envelopes to move the figure. Encourage them to tell their families the story of how Jesus surprised the people in the synagogue.



- ☐ **Hand bouquet** Invite children to create a bouquet of "hand flowers" as a reminder that God wants us to live together in love. Help children trace around their hands on construction paper and cut out the shapes. Have them decorate their



hand shapes with markers, crayons, and glitter (if desired). Help children form their hand shapes into flower shapes by taping a pipe cleaner to the base of the hand shape and stapling together the thumb and small finger. Place the "hand flowers" into a vase and place the bouquet in the worship space.

- ☐ **Collage** Many people are drawn to Jesus because of the way he shows us that God's love is for everyone. Give each child the figure of Jesus to colour and glue onto a sheet of construction paper. Invite children to choose from the pictures of people and glue as many of these as they want around their Jesus figures. Encourage children to add themselves to the picture. Have them draw lines from each person to Jesus.

Bless

Gather around the worship table and light the candle again.

Sing "We Will Follow Jesus" (see "[Additional Songs](#)," p. 76)

Pray Dear God,
thank you for stories about Jesus.
Help us to share your love
with others wherever we go. Amen.

Send each child out with the words, "(child's name), God blesses you with love."

Reflect

In what ways do the children see that they are helpers in the telling and showing of God's love?





Story Tip

When children are choosing the story characters for today's story, make sure they can see them all. They might like to name the characters before they become part of the story.

Jesus Cares

(based on Mark 1:21–28)

"Come and hear!"

"Come and hear Jesus!"

Many people hurried to the synagogue. A synagogue is like a church. The people wanted to hear Jesus speak. They had heard many good things about this new teacher.

Now they wanted to see for themselves.

(Invite children to take a figure each and place them around the figure of Jesus.)

Soon the synagogue was filled with people. Everyone waited for Jesus to speak *(pause)*.

Suddenly a man jumped up and started shouting. He sounded very angry and upset. He waved his arms in the air to get people's attention. The man was so loud that the people were afraid they wouldn't be able to hear Jesus. "Who is this noisy person? Why doesn't this person just go away?" Everybody moved back a little. They didn't want to get close. *(Have children move their figures back a little.)*

But Jesus did not move away. *(Invite a child to place the chosen figure next to Jesus.)* With great love in his eyes, Jesus looked at the man. Jesus knew that this man needed help. Jesus gently touched the man and spoke to him quietly.

The angry man listened. He looked into Jesus' eyes and saw that Jesus loved him. Slowly, slowly, the man began to feel God's love all around him and deep inside. The angry man became quiet and stopped shaking. He felt so much happier. Jesus had healed him. Jesus had helped him to know that he was welcome in the synagogue and that he belonged there too.

The people were amazed. "We don't understand this! Who is this Jesus who can heal someone with just a few words and a gentle touch? We must tell others what we have seen Jesus do today. Come, let's go!" And with those words, everyone left the synagogue. They were going to tell other people about the love Jesus had shown to this man. Jesus would soon have more and more followers.



Jesus Figure



Additional Songs

We Are Waiting

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

We are waiting, we are waiting,
every day, every day,
to celebrate a birthday,
to celebrate a birthday,
Jesus' birth! Jesus' birth!

Ring the Bells

(tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Ring, ring, ring the bells.
Ring the bells today.
Jesus comes to share God's love.
Ring the bells today.

God Is With Us

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

God is with us, God is with us,
all the time, all the time,
comforting and loving,
comforting and loving,
Thank you, God. Thank you, God.

If You're Happy and You Know It

The musical notation is in 4/4 time, key of F major. It consists of four staves of music. The lyrics and actions are as follows:

Staff 1: If you're hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers. If you're

Staff 2: hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers. If you're

Staff 3: hap - py and you know it, then your face will sure - ly show it. If you're

Staff 4: hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers.

Other verses:

If you're sad and you know it, cry boo hoo.
If you're tired and you know it, give a yawn.
If you're angry and you know it, stamp your foot.
If you're excited and you know it, give a jump.
If you're loving and you know it, throw a kiss.

God Loves Us

(tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)
Look around and you will see.
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)
God loves you and God loves me.
(Place hands over heart.)
We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)
Look around and you will know.
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)
God's love helps us all to grow.
(Bring arms up and hold hands above head.)

We Will Follow Jesus

(tune: "The Bear Went Over the Mountain")

We will follow Jesus
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Je-sus
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Je-sus
and do what Jesus did.

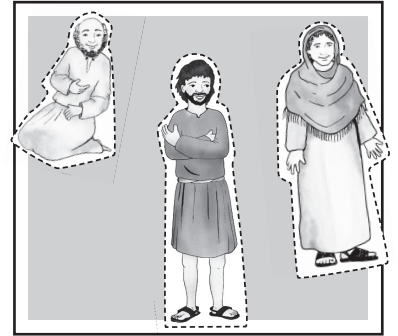


Resources for the Season after the Epiphany

Using the figures from the *Storytelling Poster*

For January 28 and February 4

The figures in the boxed section on the right of the [Storytelling Poster](#) will be used in the sessions for January 31 and February 7. These figures will become part of a display, with more figures added the second week. The intention is for the crowd around Jesus to become larger the second week, when all the remaining figures are added.



Preparation instructions

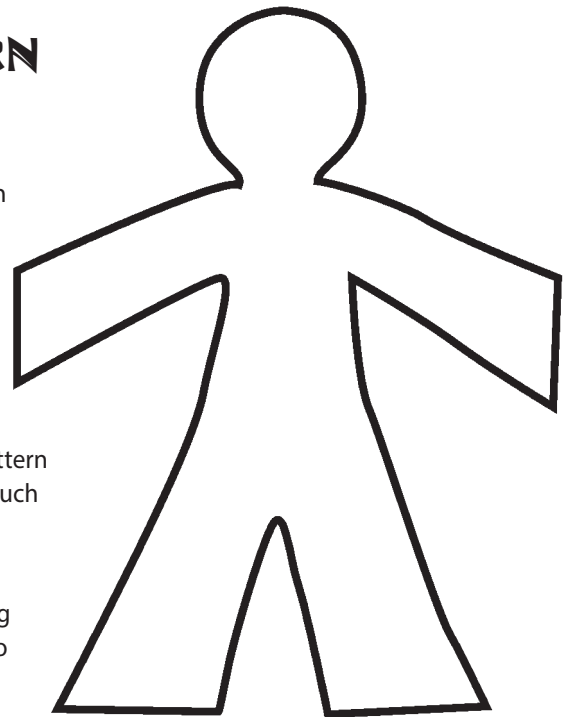
- ☐ Cut out all the figures and place some removable adhesive on the back of each one.
- ☐ Prepare a display space for the figures, either on a bulletin board or a wall space.
- ☐ Prepare a background on which figures will be placed, either a sheet of poster board or a sheet of mural paper with a painted backdrop scene (hills, trees, grassy or sandy area in foreground).
- ☐ Place the figure of Jesus (fourth from the left side on the top row) in the middle of the background.

PAPER DOLL PATTERN

For February 7

Instructions:

- Cut out the people shape and use it as a pattern (enlarge or reduce as necessary).
- Cut a sheet of lightweight paper lengthwise, then tape the halves together to make one long strip.
- Fold the strip into eighths, then use the fold lines to fold the paper accordion-style.
- With the paper still folded, place the people pattern onto the top fold so both sides of the person touch the folds.
- Cut out the shape.
- Unfold the paper to reveal many people holding hands. (Note: hand the paper dolls still folded to the children and let them reveal the number of people.)



We can follow Jesus too and spread God's love to everyone.

