

The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Peace on each one who comes in need;
Peace on each one who comes in joy.
Peace on each one who offers prayers;
Peace on each one who offers song.
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,
Peace of the Spirit, the Triune One.

Opening Prayer

Spirit of energy, Spirit of change, in whose power Jesus is anointed to be the hope of the nations: pour yourself also upon us, without reserve or distinction, that we may have confidence and strength to plant your justice on the earth, through Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Gospel

Matthew 1:18-25

John saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "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 myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came

and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

Poem: "The Lamb"

by William Blake (b. 1757)

Little Lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

Meditation

In the first chapter of John, John the Baptist is introduced as the one who is not the light, but the one who points to the light. Later in this chapter, priests and Levites from Jerusalem asked John who he was and why he was baptizing people. John said he was not a prophet but is one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord." Finally, in the gospel for this week, John calls Jesus the Lamb of God. He says "Behold the Lamb of God," first to the priests and Levites and then to two disciples. The identification of Jesus as Lamb of God is connected to the call and following of the disciples.

In the poem by William Blake, from *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, a child asks a Lamb "who made thee." One literary commentator, Oliver Tearle, calls this delightfully simple poem a "riddle, crossed with a nursery rhyme, crossed with a religious catechism." And the solution to the riddle is: "The Lamb made the lamb!" As the poem concludes, Blake has this wonderful

identification and connection between Jesus, the lamb and the child: I a child and thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.

Questions for Reflection

What images and names for Jesus are most meaningful for you?
In what way do these images and names call you to follow Jesus "more nearly?"

You may wish to watch and listen to a choral setting of this poem by the contemporary composer, John Taverner, sung by the choir of Kings' College, Cambridge (about 3 minutes):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClMUquOdDT4&t=10s>

Prayers

We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today

We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer

We bring to God a troubled situation in our world

We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection

We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives

We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. **Amen.**

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ's holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. **Amen.**

Poem and Reflection offered by: Rev'd Frank Nowell