

PREACHING BRIEF

Sermon Resources for Epiphany The third year of the lectionary cycle in 2013

MCC's inquisitive theology and hospitality embraces Christ's consciousness while living out the call for global justice so we are "Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World."

January begins the season of Epiphany, which is the perfect opportunity to re-envision the brand of Metropolitan Community Churches. Jesus constantly surprised those around him, giving them epiphanies of who he is and what is possible. MCC is constantly surprising the world with who we are and what is possible when we live out the Gospel of God's love through Christ.

The following is based on the Gospel reading in the lectionary for January leading up to Lent. These can provide you with some ideas for preaching around the new images and messages that tell the story of MCC members "Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World."

Matthew 2: 1-12 Not everyone wants to be transformed. When Herod learned of the star, he did not celebrate in hope; he cowered in fear of losing his power. He strategized and lied to find out where this new king lived so he could kill him. But God makes a way when love and transformation is in the air. The star gazers were open to their dreams and heard about a better way. Like the magi, MCC's inquisitive theology resists oppressive systems and is willing to risk following its dreams and visions of liberation, willing to risk "Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World."

Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22 Who are you? People looked at John and thought he might be the Messiah. Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do they say that I am? Who do YOU say that I am?" This story in Luke tells us that the people were 'filled with expectation' as they looked to John the Baptist, who pointed them to the work of God in the world and in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus himself was always open to being transformed so that others around him could be transformed. MCC has been baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire to continue the work of Jesus that all are God's beloved children. We hear God's call to be "Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World."



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John 2: 1-11 In the very first miracle Jesus performed, he was unsure. He challenged his mother and said his hour had not yet come! Perhaps everyone was transformed in this moment. Jesus was transformed into who he was meant to be; his mother was transformed into the one who now directed the servants to follow Jesus. The servants made it possible for events to transpire. Everyone was transformed by the best possible wine. Perhaps it seems like a frivolous miracle – making wine for a party – but a small miracle can be the first step toward “Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World.” Take the first step. If it is a small step in the right direction, you may be surprised by God’s transforming power to use you for good.

Luke 4: 14-21 The word was spreading like wildfire. He was a star! But he went to his hometown synagogue and read the book of Isaiah to the rabbis who all knew his family. “I am the fulfillment of the prophecy.” Well, that was an epiphany – an unveiling – a cosmic surprise that enraged the listeners. We expect epiphanies to be warm and fuzzy. Ah-ha moments are supposed to make sense. But epiphanies can turn your world upside down, and one of the first reactions can be to strike out. When your spiritual or emotional world gets turned upside down, breathe and let Jesus walk through the crowd of your inner voices who don’t enjoy change. Let him walk through unharmed; open your heart to what is possible so together we can be “Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World.”

Luke 9: 28-36 How long have we known Jesus? The disciples had been with him day and night for almost two years when Jesus, Peter, John, and James went up to the mountain. Suddenly, Jesus appeared in clothes as bright as lightning beside two figures who spoke of what was to come. MCC’s inquisitive theology and radical hospitality keep us open to glimpses of the transforming power of God in the world. Rather than building a monument, we have responded to those glimpses with our work for justice – work that gives us purpose – so that we can be “Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World.”

Additional third year cycle lectionary texts, which are not in use this year because of the early season of Lent:

Luke 5: 1-11 Jesus meets Simon and goes fishing with him after a long day of empty nets. Simon goes along with Jesus’ suggestion to try it again and came back with overflowing nets. Like the crowds, there is hunger in our world for the gospel MCC



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teaches, preaches, and embodies. The work of transformation we are called to involves ‘putting out into deep water’ and trusting God with the results. This trust reminds us that we are “Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World.”

Luke 6: 17-26 People were reaching out trying to touch Jesus because power was coming from him and healing them all. He responded with compassion and a call to action. The Beatitudes can be understood as the Be-Attitudes. In our context, we can ask, how can we BE MCC? What are our Be-Attitudes to BE MCC? If life makes you poor, hungry, sad, hated, insulted, we know we are in good company. Even the prophets were treated badly because they confronted injustice. Those who are satisfied because they are rich, well-fed, laughing, or even well-liked – and treat others badly because of it – have it wrong. We are all called to be “Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World” by feeding the hungry, comforting those who mourn, and serving the least of these. With all the homeless LGBT youth across this country and churches telling families to turn their backs to them, we must speak out and put our faith into action. MCC attitudes are compassion, impatience with injustice, generosity, and belief in what is possible together. Be-Attitudes – BE MCC!

Luke 6: 39-49 Jesus’ message to not judge gives us pause. Do I have a plank in my eye when I can see a speck in my neighbor’s eye that is irritating me? Some people of faith criticize LGBT people and say we can’t be part of the kingdom of God. In places like Nigeria, Uganda, Yemen, Russia and Pakistan, there are laws against our love. If we look at the world with despair and say, “That’s too big for me to get involved,” we need to take the next step toward “Transforming Ourselves as We Transform the World.” MCC’s work of transformation in the world is built on the strong foundation of hearing God’s call to justice and acting to make a difference.

Luke 7: 1-10 The Centurion’s servant was on his deathbed. Let’s be clear, a servant was a slave in that day and, as a slave, was subject to sexual subjugation by his owner – the Centurion. But the Centurion didn’t come to Jesus himself. He sent Jewish elders, perhaps those who had been criticizing Jesus. They spoke highly of the Centurion for caring about their nation and building the synagogue. Here we have an occupying military leader telling those he rules to ask an often blasphemous itinerate preacher – Jesus – to heal his servant lover. The tumult of transformations was huge. The Centurion sent his friends out to stop Jesus from coming to his home and just asked him to command the healing. In that moment, Jesus was transformed as well. He had not seen as great of faith in all of Israel. And the servant was healed.



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