

Scripture Lesson for January 10, 2021 – 1st Sunday after Epiphany

Introduction to the Epistle Lesson: Acts 19:1-7

The last half of the book of the Acts of the Apostles reports on the four major journeys Paul and his companions took planting churches. Starting in Antioch and ending in Rome, they started hundreds of new “Christian” faith communities. Our text today takes us to Ephesus, from which we get the Epistle/letter of Ephesians. Listen to the beginning of the story in Ephesus as Paul gathers with one of his notable colleagues of Paul: Apollos, who was a first Century Alexandrian Jewish Christian:

A Reading from Acts 19:1-7 -- Paul in Ephesus

19 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ² He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They replied, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³ Then he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They answered, “Into John’s baptism.” ⁴ Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— ⁷ altogether there were about twelve of them.

Introduction: The Gospel Lesson Mark 1:4-11

The gospels of Matthew and Luke begin with their version of the birth of Jesus. John begins with a strong declaration of Jesus and the “word made flesh.” And different from those three gospels, Mark begins with John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus. Listen to a reading from Mark:

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:4-11 -- The Baptism of Jesus

⁴ John the baptizer appeared^[a] in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate

locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with^[b] water; but he will baptize you with^[c] the Holy Spirit.”

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved;^[d] with you I am well pleased.”