

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The word *Epiphany* means “manifestation,” “revelation,” or “showing;” and in the Epiphany season we are presented with a series of luminous moments, in which Jesus reveals himself as Messiah, Saviour, and Lord. After the story of the Wise Men on the day of Epiphany itself, the first of these is Jesus’ Baptism, which is always celebrated on the Sunday following the day of Epiphany.

From the standpoint of children’s experience of the church year, this is quite a jolt. No longer do we imagine Jesus as a little baby: suddenly he has grown up. Since your child’s experience of baptism is probably associated with infant baptisms, it may be necessary for you to explain that it was not Baby Jesus who was baptized by John. Jesus grew up and waited for God to make his mission clear to him; then, when he was ready, he went to John to receive baptism as a sign of his total commitment to God’s call.

When we set out to follow Jesus, we are baptized not only into his call and his mission, but also into his death and resurrection. The water of baptism and the seal of the Spirit make us God’s chosen servants, not only along with Jesus but *in him*: we are taken up into his risen life, to share it as members of his Body.

If your children were baptized in infancy, they will, of course, have no conscious memory of their baptism. You can help them own their baptism by sharing your memories. How old were they? What did they look like? What did they wear? Did they cry, or make a face when the water was poured ... or did they sleep through the whole ceremony? What day was it—what hymns were sung? Was it in your present church? If not, where? What did the church furnishings look like? Who celebrated? Do you have photographs? Was there a party afterwards? Who was there? Who are the godparents? Does your child see them often and know them?

Talk about the promises that were made. How can we be faithful to those promises? Encourage your children to express their own ideas and feelings about their baptisms, and to participate eagerly in the renewal of vows whenever there is a baptism in church.

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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B
1st SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY

When Jesus was baptized,
he saw God's Spirit, like a dove,
coming down on him.
He heard God's voice:
"You are my beloved Son;
I am pleased with you"

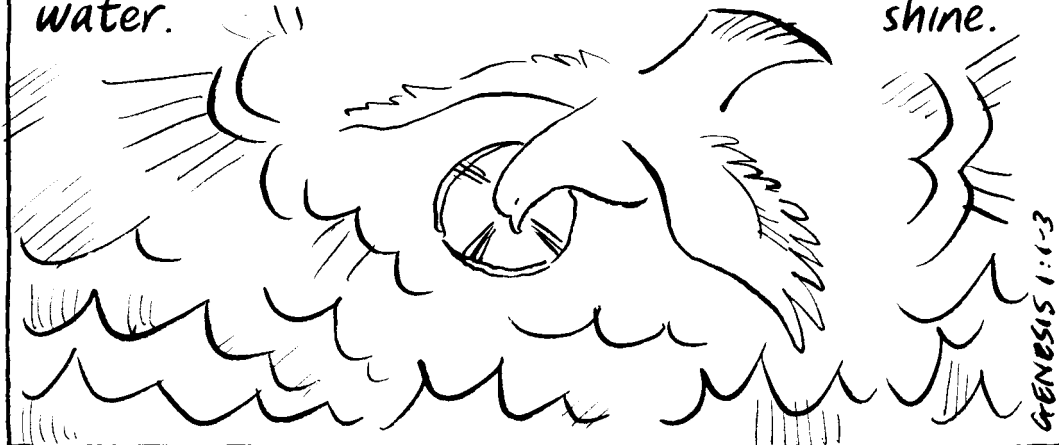
MARK 1:10-11



JESUS WAS BAPTIZED IN WATER.

The Bible says that in the beginning, the world was full of water.

God's Spirit moved over the water, and God's light began to shine.



When people began to believe Jesus, they were baptized, and received God's Spirit.

ACTS 19:1-7



Today when we are baptized, God promises us his Spirit.



When Jesus was baptized, God's Spirit came to him. He knew he was special. He knew that God had special work for him to do.

When we are baptized, God's Spirit comes to us, too. We become part of Jesus. We are special. God has special work for us to do.



How old were you when you were baptized? What happened at your baptism? Under the dove, draw yourself, being baptized.

THE SUNDAY PAPER

Year B
1st SUNDAY
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EPIPHANY

Advent and Christmas are over. We have finished waiting for the Messiah, and now we will no longer be thinking of the Messiah as a little baby. Instead, we are learning how Jesus was the Messiah, because he grew up and did the Messiah's work, and made God's ancient promises start to come true!

Our Gospel today takes us back to John the Baptist.

JESUS IS BAPTIZED

Mark 1:4-11

WHEN JESUS WAS ABOUT THIRTY YEARS OLD, JOHN WAS TELLING THE PEOPLE ABOUT GOD'S KINGDOM!



John baptized people to help them wash away their sinfulness and get ready for what God was going to do.

Christians are baptized for the same reasons. But besides that, something special happens when we are baptized. God shares his Spirit with us so we can join in the Messiah's work!

GENESIS 1:2

(In the beginning of creation, God's Spirit moves over the waters)



PSALM 29:3

"The voice of the Lord is on the mighty waters; God is King for evermore"



ACTS 19:1-7

(God sends the Holy Spirit to some people who have newly begun to believe in Jesus)



A NOTE TO PARENTS

In Epiphany season, we traditionally hear the stories of Jesus's calling of his disciples. This year is no different. The familiar story of the calling of James and John by the Sea of Galilee will be our Gospel next week; this week we have the oddly detailed account, from John, of Jesus, Philip, and Nathanael under the fig tree: "Nathanael! Guess what! I've found the Messiah!" "You *what?*" "I've found the Messiah! He asked me to follow him!" "You're kidding! Who is he?" "Jesus—you know, the rabbi, from Nazareth ..." "Nazareth????!! Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" "Come on! I'll show you!" As the two of them appear, Jesus says with a twinkle in his eye, "Now there's a good son of Israel!" and Nathanael is utterly smitten: "How do you know me?" "Why," says Jesus, "I saw you under the fig tree, of course!" This is too much for Nathanael: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, the King of Israel ..." "You think I'm the Messiah, because I saw you under a tree?!! Let me tell you, this is only the beginning ..."

Philip is there because Jesus called him and he dropped everything and came. But Nathanael—however loyal and tender he may have immediately become—Nathanael is there, at first, not because of Jesus but because of Philip. Nathanael is invited to this particular party because his friend Philip went looking for him and thought to include him. Philip's call then becomes Jesus' call, and Nathanael is undone; but the call began with Philip.

Jesus calls all of us—but there are few of us whom he calls without the work of a human intermediary. Like Nathanael, we have come to Jesus because somebody cared enough to say to us, "Guess what I've found!" ... "Come and see!"—and when we did, we found Jesus waiting for us as if it had been his idea all along.

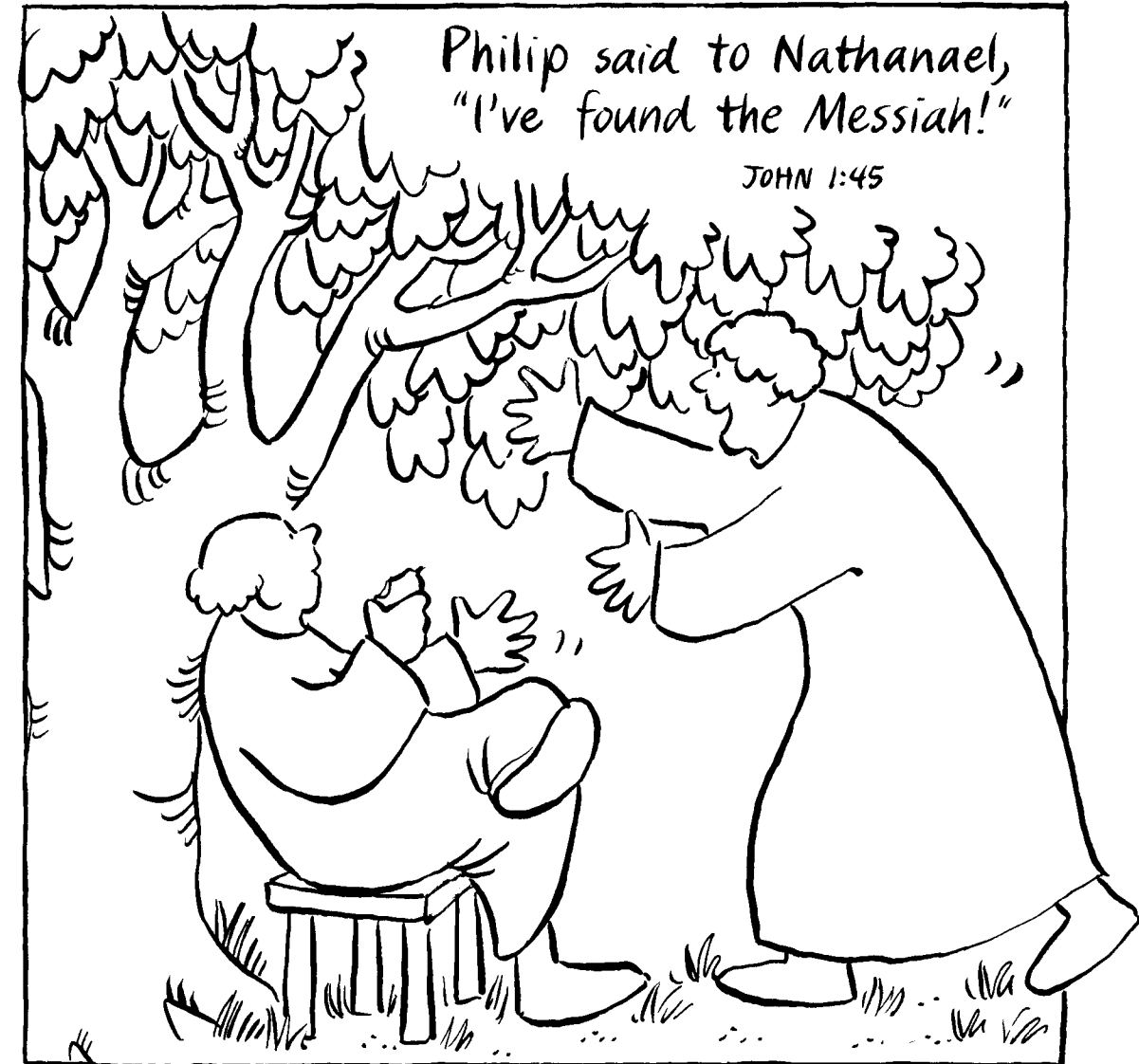
Ask your children to consider how they have learned about Jesus. Who has been the "Philip" for them? Share your own story with your child: who was "Philip" for you? How did you respond? There may have been many Philips in your life. Have you ever been Philip for anyone else? Try inviting a friend to church next week!

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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B
2nd SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY



After Jesus was baptized,
he set out to do God's
work.



He needed helpers, so he
asked a man named
Philip to come with him.



Philip went and told
his friend Nathanael,
"I've found the Messiah!"

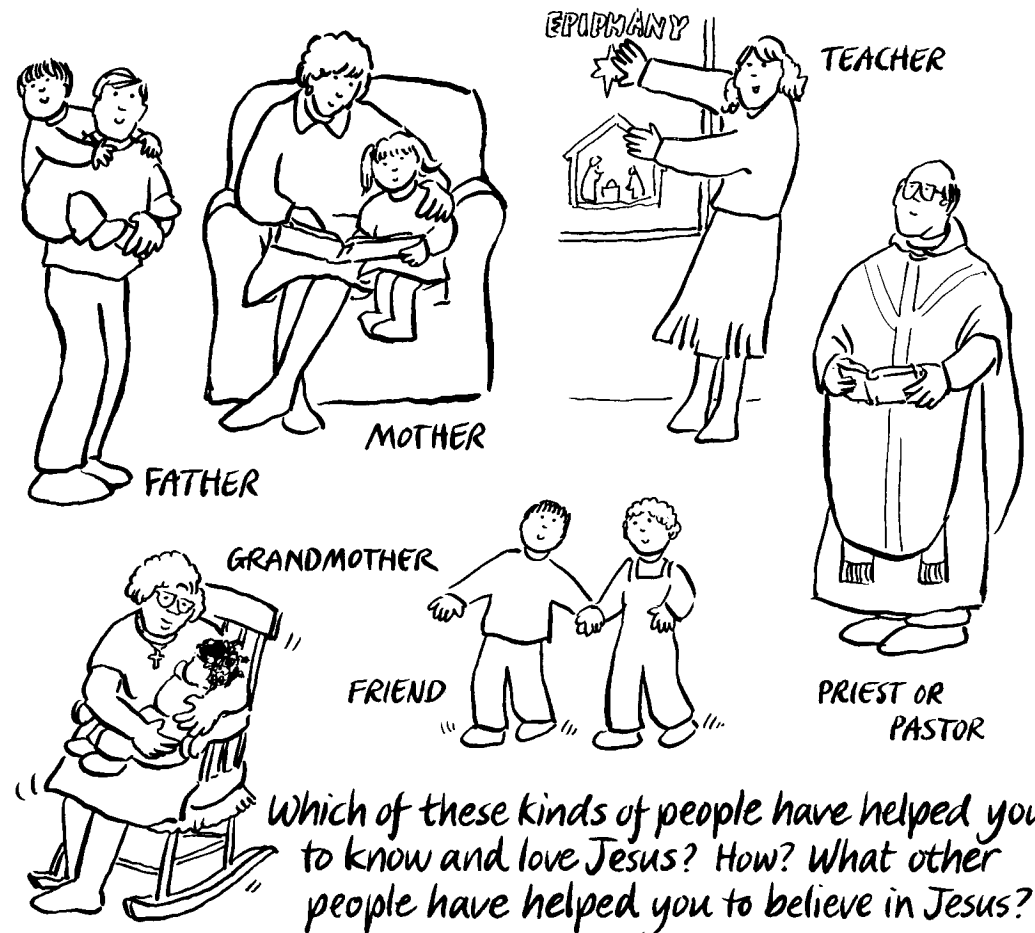


Nathanael decided to go
with Jesus too. He said,
"You are the Messiah!"



Philip came with Jesus because Jesus called
to him. But Nathanael came because Philip
told him about Jesus.

We learn about Jesus from other people. People
wrote the stories of Jesus in the Bible. And people
today help us to believe in Jesus and love him.



Which of these kinds of people have helped you
to know and love Jesus? How? What other
people have helped you to believe in Jesus?

THE SUNDAY PAPER

Year B
2nd SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY

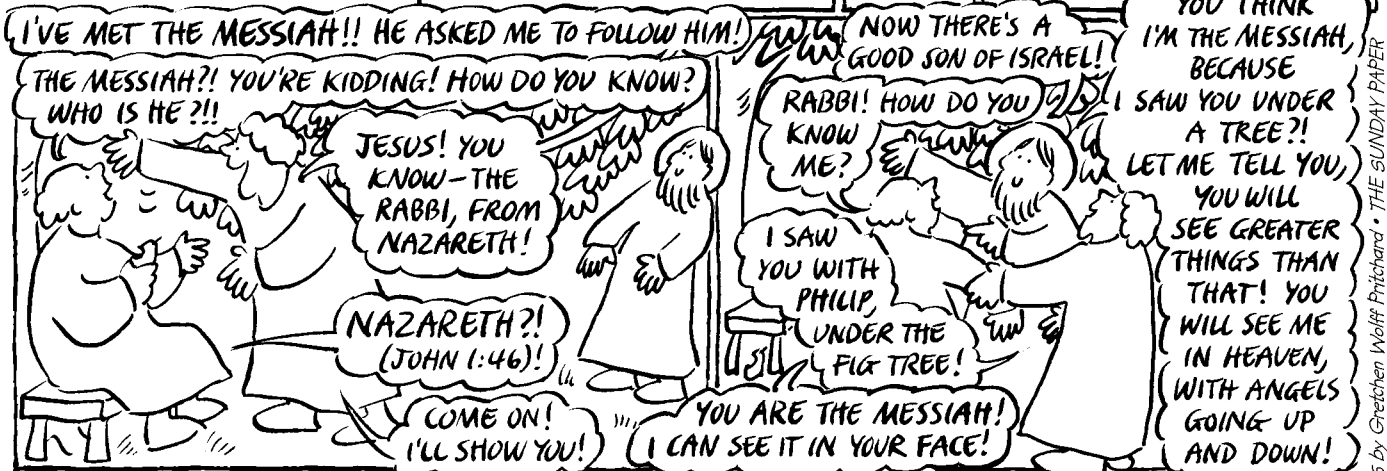
In the weeks after Epiphany, we learn how Jesus started to do God's work, and people began to wonder who he was. After he was baptized by John, Jesus went away by himself to pray to God, and decide what God wanted him to do. When he came back, he began to tell people, "God's Kingdom is right here!" and he showed God's love by healing and helping people.

When people saw Jesus, they felt he was special. They felt that something new was happening in the world!

JESUS, PHILIP AND NATHANAEAL

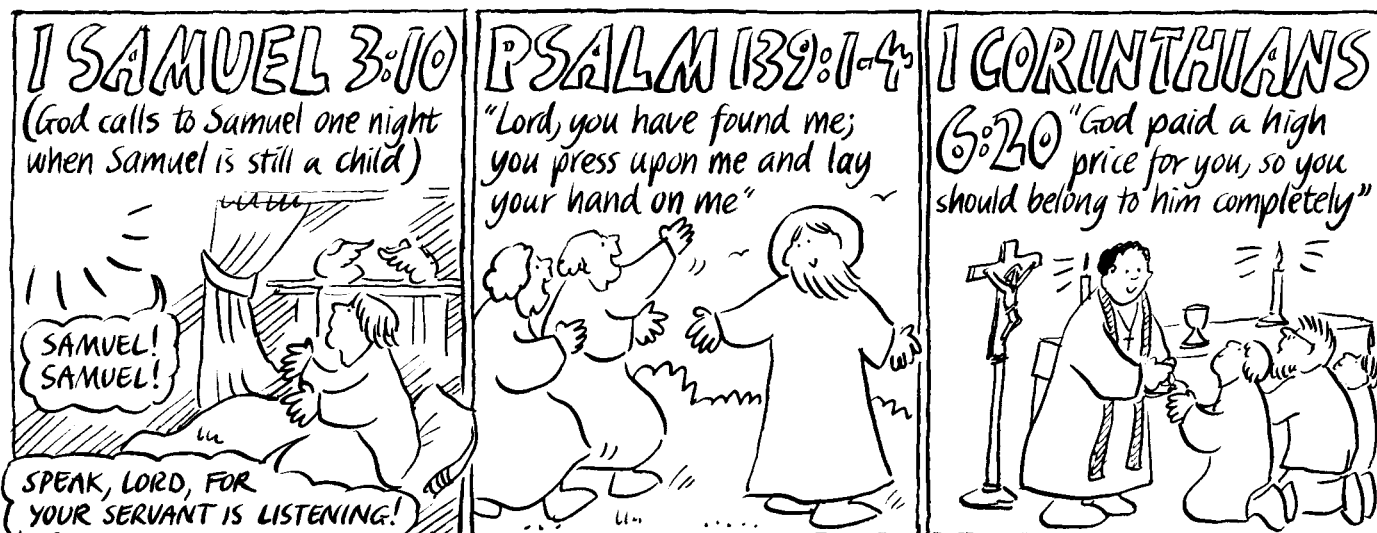
John 1:43-51

JESUS WAS IN GALILEE, WHERE HE HAD GROWN UP. HE MET A MAN NAMED PHILIP!



Jesus's coming was so wonderful that people left what they were doing and went with him. They obeyed his call. Jesus calls us, too, to come with him and do God's work!

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A NOTE TO PARENTS

I once heard the Church described as “one beggar learning from another, where to find bread.” The Church happens—the Church is most itself—when its message is, “Guess what! We’ve found the Messiah! Come and see!”

“Guess what! Somebody cares about you: come and see!”

“Guess what! Your sins are forgiven: come and see!”

“Guess what! There is bread for your deepest, most secret hunger ... the hunger for God: come and see!”

Jesus called twelve disciples to share with him the work of proclaiming God’s Kingdom and giving flesh to that proclamation: “Guess what! The Kingdom is coming: come and see!” He told them to go out and catch people as if they were fish—to spread a net wide and haul them in in great numbers—to announce a message so joyous, so irresistible, that the whole world will want to come and see, and, seeing, will know that here at last is bread for the gnawing hunger, deep inside, that comes with being human.

Christ is the bread for our hunger; and those who have found him are charged with making him known—with spreading the word to the other beggars that here at last is bread. With the call to discipleship comes a call to *evangelism*, the work of spreading the Good News. We may criticize the street-corner preacher or the intrusive dropper of tracts; we may have grave reservations about the theology, as well as the personal dynamics, of accosting people with the question, “Are you saved?” But abuses of evangelism by some Christians do not remove God’s call to all Christians to make Christ known; to fish for God’s people; to go to other beggars like ourselves and tell them where we have found bread.

If we were brought up as Christians, our parents did the work of evangelism for us. Now that we are parents ourselves, that responsibility rests with us. We are our children’s evangelists: it is up to us to be sure that they hear the Good News. And we can encourage them, in turn, to be evangelists. They can invite a friend to come to Sunday School or church: “Come and see!”

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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B
3rd SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY



Jesus was starting to do God's work. He said, "God's Kingdom is near!"



Jesus needed helpers. He asked Simon and Andrew to help him.



Then he asked James and John.

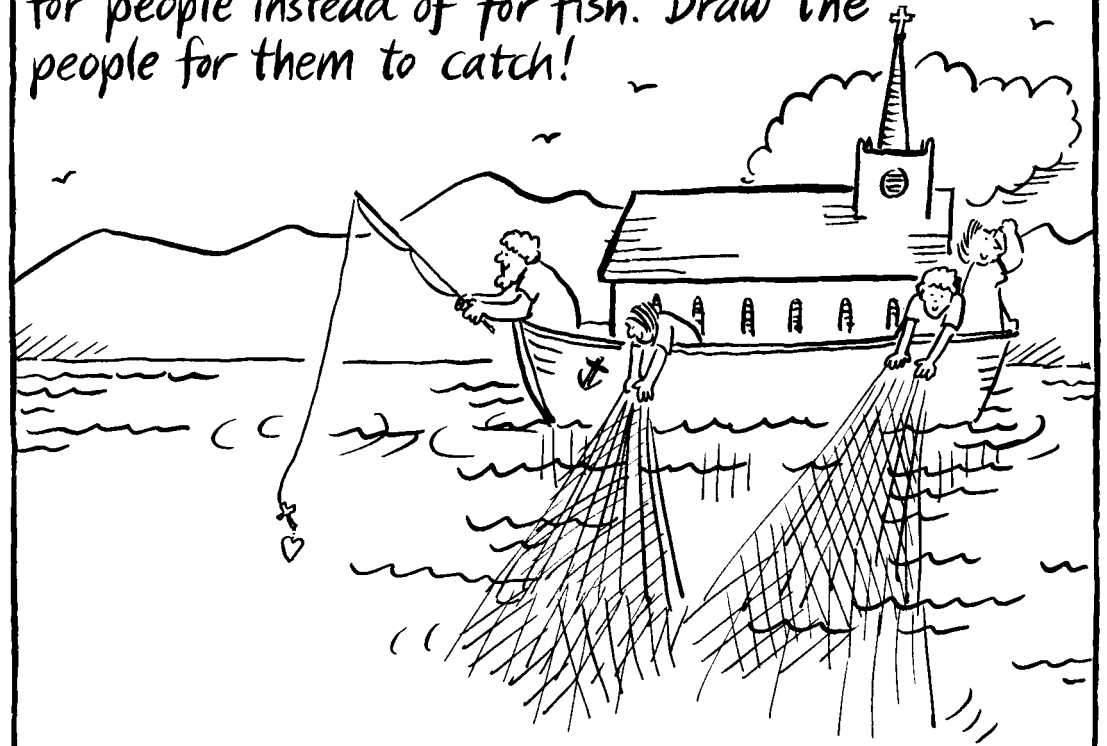


They stopped what they were doing, and came with Jesus!



Jesus wants people to belong to him. He wants us to know and love him, and help him do God's work. He wants us to help other people to belong to him.

Jesus told his friends that now they would fish for people instead of for fish. Draw the people for them to catch!



THE SUNDAY PAPER

Year B
3rd SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY

After he was baptized, Jesus went into the desert to pray. He needed to decide what God wanted the Messiah to do to make his Kingdom come. When Jesus came back from this time of prayer, he started to go around the country. He said, "God's kingdom is really coming!" He healed and helped people, so they would know that God was with them.

We call this work Jesus's MINISTRY. (MINISTRY means "helping people.") When Jesus began his ministry, he chose some helpers. We call his helpers DISCIPLES.

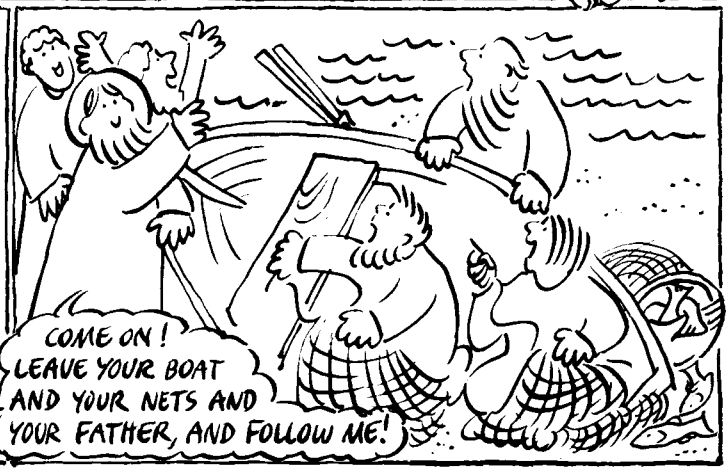
JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK

Mark 1:14-20

JESUS DECIDED THAT
THIS IS WHAT GOD WANTED
THE MESSIAH TO DO!



ONE DAY, JESUS WAS BY THE LAKE!
THE TWO BROTHERS, SIMON AND ANDREW, LEFT THEIR WORK AND FOLLOWED JESUS! THEN HE MET TWO MORE BROTHERS, JAMES AND JOHN!



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Jesus chose his disciples to come with him, learn from him, and help him do God's work. God does not do his work all by himself. He asks us to do it with him!



A NOTE TO PARENTS

"And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." (Mark 1:22)

In each of the three years of our lectionary cycle, we concentrate on one of the three "Synoptic Gospels:" Matthew, Mark, and Luke. "Synoptic" means "seen with the same eye," and these three Gospels are so called because they follow much the same outline and contain many of the same incidents from the same point of view. In contrast, the Gospel of John is very different, and its special episodes and insights are spread over the three years of our cycle of readings, especially during the season of Lent.

We are now in Year B, or the year of Mark. Mark is the shortest of the Synoptics, with only 16 chapters. But even when the season of Epiphany is quite long, we barely make it out of the first chapter of Mark. *Jesus comes forth, is baptized, is tempted in the wilderness, chooses his disciples, and performs a very large number of miracles, three of which are described in detail—all in the space of 45 verses.* The chapter moves at a near-breakneck pace: starting with verse 9, when Jesus comes out from Galilee to be baptized, the word "immediately" is used eight times, plus the phrase "at once" in verse 28. Jesus appears among God's people like a meteor, drawing everyone's attention, blazing with luminous energy, changing the whole face of the sky. The powers of darkness recognize him and tremble. The people of God know that something great is stirring: they become restless, agitated, excitable. They are *amazed* and *astonished*. *Immediately*, they are faced with a choice: acknowledge Jesus's Messiahship as coming directly from God, or line themselves up in opposition. Mark makes it clear that we, as we read, must make the same choice.

Read the first chapter of Mark with your child, without a break. Make it sound exciting: by the end, you should be out of breath! Let your child imagine what it would have been like to have this man break into your world. How would you have responded? Would you have believed, and followed him?

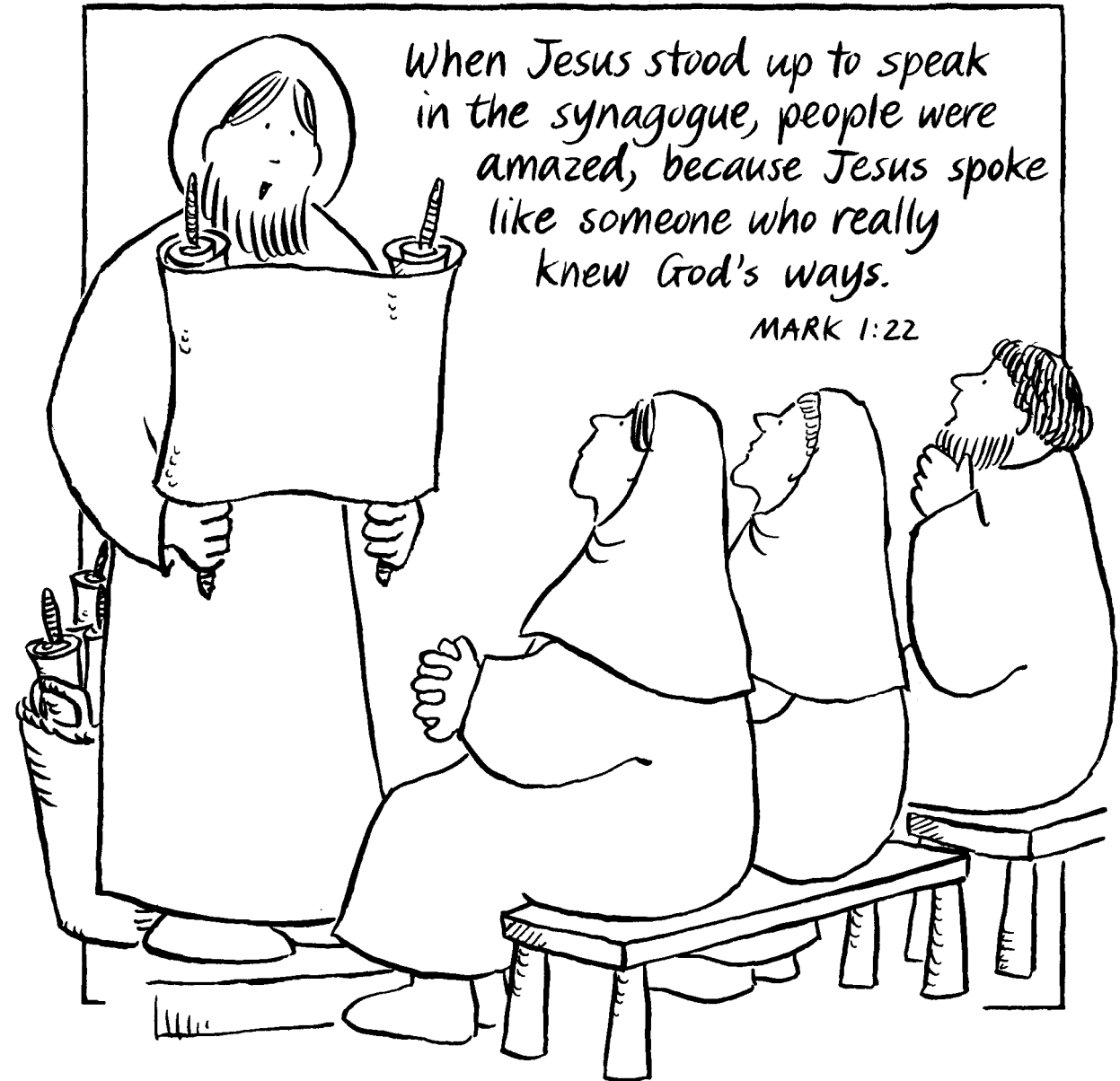
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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B
4th SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY



Jesus went to worship God in the synagogue. He stood up to preach.



People were amazed at the way he talked. He seemed to know so much about God!

A man whose mind was sick got up and started to yell at Jesus. / /



Jesus made him be quiet. Then he healed him! People said, "Jesus has God's power!"



People began to believe in Jesus because they could tell he was special. He really knew what God was like. He really loved God. He had God's wonderful power to save and heal people.

When people believed in Jesus, they FOLLOWED him. They tried to be near him, and they tried to be full of God's love, like Jesus.

Today, we are Jesus's followers. Draw yourself, following Jesus. Draw other people who follow him.



THE SUNDAY PAPER

Year 13
4th SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY

Jesus came to set us free and make us God's children. That is the Messiah's work. Jesus decided that God wanted him to do this in two ways. First, he wanted him to tell people that God's Kingdom was coming, and show them God's love and forgiveness and power. Then, he wanted him to die for us and rise again, to show that nothing can stop God's Kingdom.

St. Mark tells us that once Jesus decided that this was what God wanted, he started right in!

JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

Mark 1:21-28

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WENT INTO A TOWN CALLED CAPERNAUM. ON THE SABBATH DAY THEY WENT TO THE SERVICE IN THE SYNAGOGUE!

JESUS WAS A "RABBI," OR TEACHER, SO HE WAS ASKED TO SPEAK!

THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD...

... AND HERE IS WHAT I SAY TO YOU ABOUT GOD'S KINGDOM! IT IS COMING NOW, AND IT IS LIKE THIS...

I'VE NEVER HEARD ANY RABBI SAY THINGS LIKE THIS!

LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THIS RABBI! HE IS FULL OF GOD'S SPIRIT!

BUT THAT DAY THERE WAS SOMEONE THERE WHOSE MIND WAS VERY SICK!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, JESUS OF NAZARETH?!

ARE YOU OUT TO GET ME?! I KNOW WHO YOU ARE— (MARK 1:24)!!

DEMON, BE QUIET AND COME OUT OF HIM!!

AAUGGH!

THE MAN FELL ON THE FLOOR! WHEN HE GOT UP, HE WAS IN HIS RIGHT MIND!

LOOK WHAT HE DID! HE HEALED HIM!

JESUS OF NAZARETH HAS GOD'S HEALING POWER!!

In Jesus's day, people thought mental illness was caused by devils. Jesus showed that God's Kingdom is stronger than devils. If we follow Jesus, God's Kingdom is stronger than anything!

DEUTERONOMY

18:18 God says, "I will choose a new prophet to tell my words to my people"



PSALM III:2

"Great are the deeds of the Lord! Everyone who loves him studies his mighty works"



1 CORINTHIANS

8:6 "There is just one God, who made us, and one Lord, Jesus, who rules all things"



A NOTE TO PARENTS

The image of Jesus as healer is one that is very appealing to children, and which they accept very readily. They seem to understand that there was a special, uniquely powerful presence during the few years of Jesus' earthly ministry, which may flash out among us time and again, but which is not with us today in quite the same way. They may wish with deep longing that they had been there to see and know Jesus; but their faith in him as savior and healer may be genuine and deep without leading them to expect that he will magically "fix" chicken pox or a broken arm overnight.

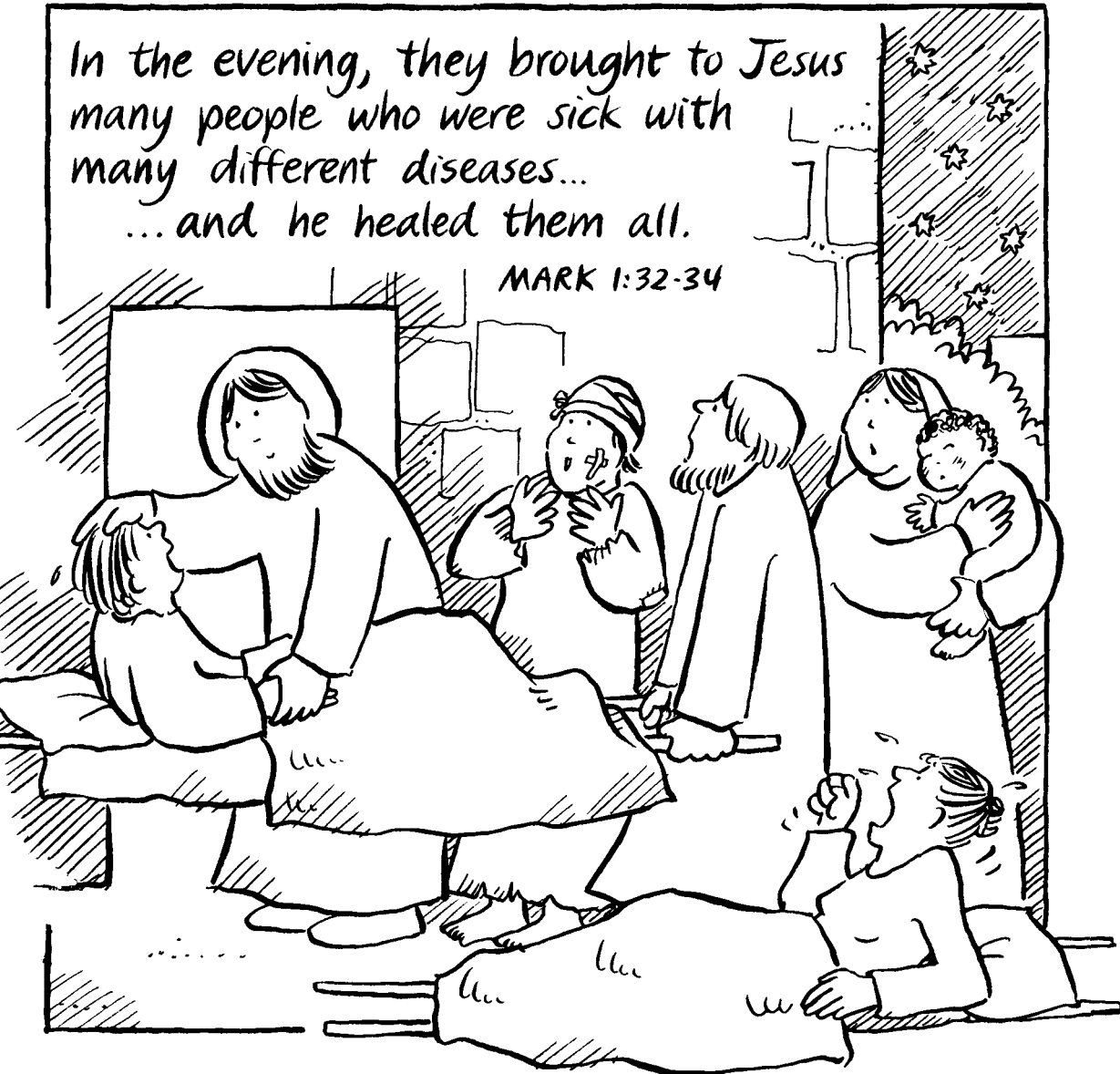
What does surprise children, as it may surprise us, is the discovery that the exercise of healing power was extremely costly to Jesus. We read again and again in the Gospels that Jesus was *exhausted* by his healing ministry. When a desperate woman reached out and touched him in a crowd, he felt "power" go out of him (Luke 8:46). He sometimes had to go to great lengths to get away for a while and make time for prayer and renewal. He was not a man of steel, with no need for food, sleep, or recreation. In his Father he had access, as we do, to an inexhaustible source of love and strength; but for him, as for us, drawing from that source took work, which in turn required space, time, and emotional energy, commodities that were as precious to him as they are to us.

As Jesus' followers, we must work, as he did, at "waiting upon the Lord" to "renew our strength." Children can be taught some elementary techniques of meditation at a very young age; they are surprisingly responsive. Sit together in a quiet, comfortable place with your eyes closed. Help your child to breathe slowly and deeply, and to relax the body, one part at a time. Then gently lead your child to visualize the great love and peace of God—"like a wide, deep ocean," "like the sky," "like a light in a dark and scary place," "like a soft, warm bird, sitting on a nest," "like Everlasting Arms, holding you." Use whatever images come naturally to you. This can be a treasured time of closeness for you, your child, and God. It can also lay the groundwork for a lifetime of discipleship, and openness to God's healing gifts.

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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B
5th SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY



Jesus came to stay at Simon and Andrew's house. But Simon's wife's mother was very sick.



Jesus came and took her hand. She sat up. She was well!



Soon, everyone was bringing sick people to Jesus, for him to heal them.

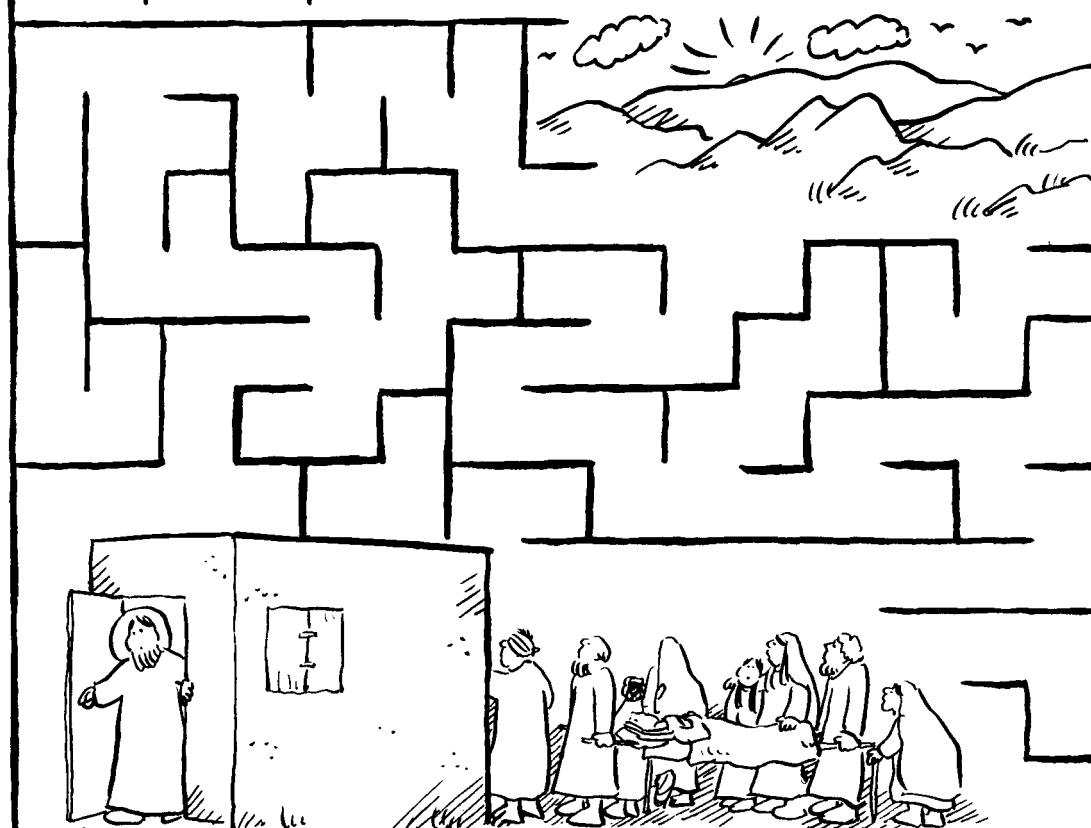


To be alone and pray, Jesus had to get up very early, and go out away from the town.



People could tell that Jesus was full of God's power and love. They came crowding around him, asking him to heal them.

But sometimes Jesus needed to be alone. He needed a quiet time to pray to God. He needed to keep God's power and love alive in his heart.



Help Jesus get away to a quiet place and pray. Then help him come back, full of God's power, and heal the people.

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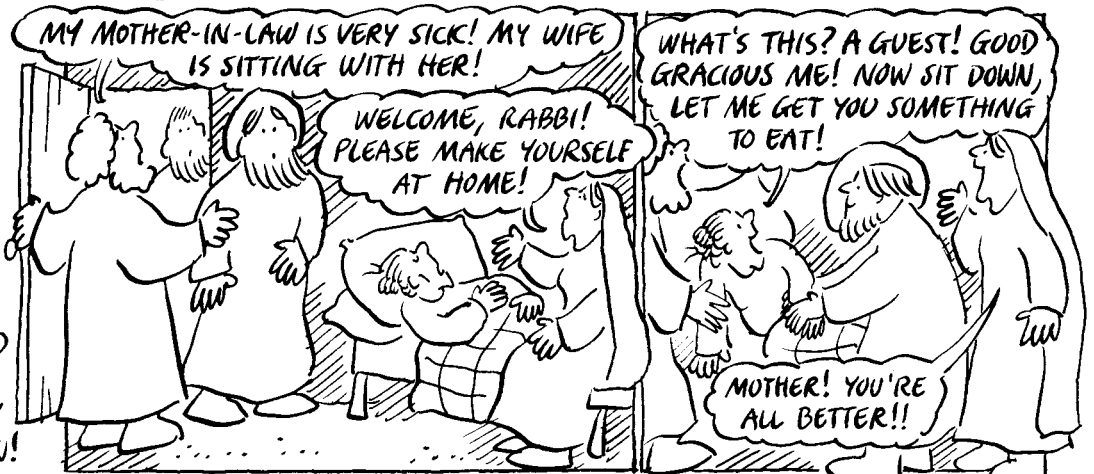
Year B
5th SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY

The stories of Jesus's life are called GOSPELS, because "GOSPEL" means "good news." Jesus brought us good news. He told people that God's Kingdom was here, right now, for people who tried to live as God's children. He healed people who were hurt or sick in their bodies or minds. He showed that God loves us and forgives us. He showed that our problems do not mean that God is punishing us. Our problems are something that God wants to heal!

JESUS HEALS PEOPLE

Mark 1:29-39

WHEN JESUS HAD HEALED THE MAN IN THE SYNAGOGUE, HE WENT TO STAY WITH SIMON AND ANDREW!



PEOPLE HAD BEGUN TO HEAR ABOUT JESUS! THAT EVENING, MANY SICK PEOPLE CAME TO THE DOOR!



The beautiful world that God made is full of so much evil and pain. It is hard to understand why this is. But Jesus showed that God is stronger than evil. His Kingdom can grow in our hearts, and one day it will fill the whole world!



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A NOTE TO PARENTS

On the mountaintop, for a brief moment, Jesus' friends see him as he truly is. Radiant with light and life, he stands as the Son of God, expressing to the Father's perfect satisfaction the will and providence of God; yet he also stands with Moses and Elijah as the human servant of God, embodying in his obedience all the obedience and heroism of God's people, past, present, and future.

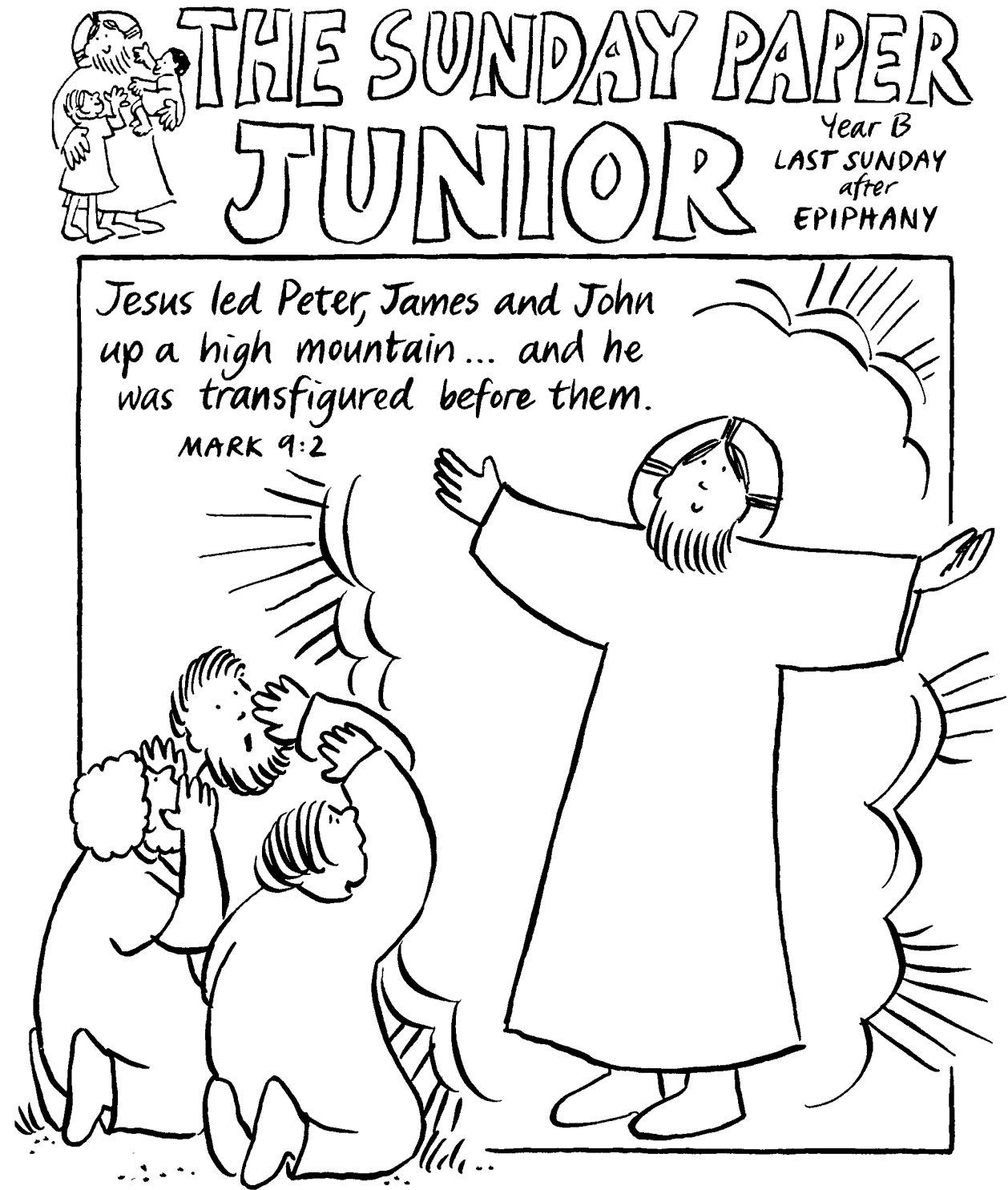
Jesus has just asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They struggle to express what they have seen, and heard, and learned of him: "A prophet ... like John the Baptist ... like Elijah ..." and Simon finally says it, "You are the Messiah ... you are the Son of God!" Jesus says, "Yes," and tries to describe to them what that means: it means the Cross along with the crown. But this they cannot grasp, and in Mark's account the conversation simply ends. Then, "six days later," Jesus takes three of them up the mountain, and shows them everything they have struggled to formulate about him as they have watched him at work and tried to copy him. It all comes clear in this moment; they do not grasp it as a concept, they simply perceive it as a single, whole, undifferentiated experience, like opening their mouths and swallowing. *Jesus is God. Jesus is us. It all comes together in him.*

We all have moments of "epiphany" or "transfiguration" in our lives, when for a brief interlude an issue with which we have been struggling (consciously or not) suddenly falls into place and becomes clear. There is evidence that moments of sudden and overwhelming insight into the very nature of God may sometimes, even often, occur in the lives of very young children. They may be unable to verbalize this experience even to themselves; but it is real, it may be remembered vividly for decades, and it can be enormously influential in a child's lifelong spirituality. Parents cannot control these experiences. But we can provide an atmosphere which is accepting of our children's unique encounters with God, and which enables them, as they grow, to name the One who has met them on the mountaintop and to channel the light and life they have seen in him into obedience and love.

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Jesus went up a mountain to pray. He took three of his friends with him.



There, he was changed! His whole body became full of dazzling light!



Jesus's friends saw MOSES and ELIJAH, two great heroes from the past.



They heard a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son! Listen to him!"

When Jesus was TRANSFIGURED, his friends saw that he was God's own Son! He was full of glory and new life. It was in him all the time, but now they could see it.

We all know many things that have something new and wonderful hidden inside them. Match the ordinary things with the wonderful things that they become when they are TRANSFIGURED.



THE SUNDAY PAPER

Year B
LAST SUNDAY
after
EPIPHANY

This Sunday is the end of the EPIPHANY season. Epiphany began soon after Christmas, with the visit of the Wise Men to Jesus, Jesus's baptism, and the words of the prophets about the Messiah. "EPIPHANY" means "showing." So in this season we have seen how Jesus showed he was the Messiah, and how the Messiah and the Messiah's work show what God and his Kingdom are like. We end Epiphany with a very special kind of showing. We call it the TRANSFIGURATION.

JESUS IS TRANSFIGURED!
Mark 9:2-9

JESUS HAD JUST ASKED HIS FRIENDS, "WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?" AND THEY SAID, "YOU ARE THE MESSIAH, THE SAVIOR!"

A FEW DAYS LATER, HE WENT UP A MOUNTAIN WITH THREE OF HIS FRIENDS: PETER, JAMES AND JOHN!



AND HE WAS TRANSFIGURED!! HE WAS CHANGED, SO HIS WHOLE BODY BECAME FULL OF DAZZLING LIGHT!



AND TWO PEOPLE APPEARED WITH HIM! ONE WAS MOSES, AND ONE WAS ELIJAH! THEY WERE SPEAKING WITH HIM!



SUDDENLY, THE BRIGHTNESS VANISHED!

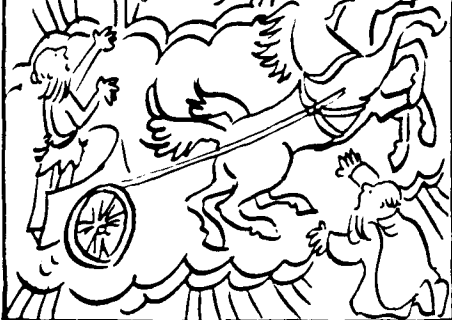


Jesus's friends believed he was the Messiah. Now Jesus was showing them that he was God's own Son! He was God himself, come to earth to be with us! When Jesus was transfigured, they saw the beauty and holiness of God!

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2 KINGS 2:11

(Elisha watches as Elijah is carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire)



PSALM 50:2

"Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, God reveals himself in glory"



2 CORINTHIANS 4:6

"God has made his light shine in our hearts, and shown us the glory of his Son"

