

Sermon for 16 January 2022 @ Bethesda UMC  
Second Sunday after The Epiphany/Human Relations Day  
Scriptures: Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11  
***“How do they do it?”***

Like modern medicine in the pandemic, biblical scholarship gives us new tools for studying the Bible and applying it to our contemporary times. Last Sunday we used the baptism of Jesus to think of him as ONE OF US, bringing God close like children are close to their families and to their friends.. The Sunday before, Epiphany Sunday, we saw Jesus the young child deeply honored by wise scholars who read the stars to find his humble home. That gave us our “moment of fame” among the world’s religions, announcing Jesus as THE path of spiritual understanding for “all who are called.”

Today we use more recent history ... service projects all across the world that our church uses to help unite and uplift all kinds of people.. as our focus. The Bible texts we cite today remind us how both Jews and Christians held serving the needy as basic to following Jesus, and working towards a better time is fundamental to trusting God. In the biographical text by John, a dramatic incident in Jesus’ first days of leadership gives something we can grab hold of, like a formula or a photograph, to remind us what we are about as Christ-followers. With no urge to “show off” or gain power, Jesus performed a miracle, and people believed in his genuine gift of leadership. The passage from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian describes believers sharing their talents with each other and growing stronger and more useful through mutual respect and cooperation.

In each of these ways, these familiar Bible passages stimulates thought for this specific Sunday, which shine the light on organized religion in its healing and uniting tasks.

Now I’m again going to take the risk of opening the microphone to hear from you what the Spirit brings to us as a fellowship. Start with my question: “What got these people going?” and relate it to what we do now as people of faith. What’s really true that comes alive in our spirituality? How does that spread?

*(Pause for comments and responses, including silence).*

*(Sentences that have stirred me along the lines of these texts:*

- 1) Standing in front of the bus*
- 2) Work smarter, not harder*
- 3) Solidarity is for white women*
- 4) Good feminism*
- 5) Try not to do the same thing again.)*

*Let us pray: God, guide us to use this Sunday to grow in sensitivity to others. Get us over the hump of apologizing, either to our neighbors or to ourselves, or even to you. Focus us on the new, good responses we can have to all trouble. Bring to life what YOUR life really is: more even than creativity, let us see your sublime enjoyment in everything that is, including us ... and convince our stubborn focus on punishment of the much greater significance of renewal and, in fact, of new birth.*

*Get us going, Lord. Show us how lively a little church can be; how redemptive just know each other in your house can be for us and others beyond these ways. Engage us in the marvelous experience of NOT dying, but waking up new day after day and night after night.*

*Show us how the believers who went before us did it ....and get us going on our part of the journey...*

*In Jesus' name, Amen.*