1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul,
called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus
by the will of God,
and our brother Sosthenes,

2 To the church of God that is in Corinth,
to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus,
called to be saints,
together with all those who in every place
call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
both their Lord and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I give thanks to my God always for you
because of the grace of God
that has been given you
in Christ Jesus,

5 for in every way you have been enriched in him,
in speech and knowledge of every kind—

6 just as the testimony of Christ
has been strengthened among you—

7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift
as you wait for the revealing
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

8 He will also strengthen you to the end,
so that you may be blameless
on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 God is faithful;
by him you were called
into the fellowship of his Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 1:29-42

29 The next day
he saw Jesus coming towards him
and declared,
'Here is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world!

30 This is he of whom I said,
"After me comes a man
who ranks ahead of me
because he was before me."

31 I myself did not know him;
but I came baptizing with water
for this reason,
that he might be revealed
to Israel.'

32 And John testified,
'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove,
and it remained on him.

33 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."

34 And I myself have seen
and have testified
that this is
the Son of God.'*

35 The next day
John again was standing
with two of his disciples,

[36]and as he watched Jesus walk by,
he exclaimed,
'Look, here is the Lamb of God!'

[37]The two disciples heard him say this,
and they followed Jesus.

[38]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?'

[39]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.

[40]One of the two
who heard John speak and followed him
was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

[41]He first found his brother Simon
and said to him,
'We have found the Messiah'
(which is translated Anointed).

[42]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).

Reading the Epistle this Week

Each Epiphany season in the 3-year lectionary
we hear 1 Corinthians – this year from chapters 1-3
(then the middle, then the end of the letter – recall last year?)

Corinth, rebuilt as Rome's provincial capital and port in 44BCE
Paul gets there early from our Syria and Turkey to our Greece
He keeps moving, but writes letters back to the Corinth church

We get one side of a conversation – like a spliced transcript,
from more than one back-and-forth exchanges –
we have to infer the other side of the dialogues

It's like an 'open letter' in a newspaper, commentator onscreen
it's meant for specific audience, and to be overheard by others,
first early in Paul's travels, then edited and echoed till today

This week is the formal opening, like any letter of the time:
from "" to "", compliments and best wishes
How else could vv1-3 have been written? (compare others!)

Rhetoric and courtesy are cultural – and universal –
the art of communicating and being understood,
of persuading and being effective

if I choose to compliment you about something,
did you doubt it, or need it,
or did others deny it about you?

If I encourage you and say what I hope for you,
is it because you are discouraged,
or unclear about your future?

Soon enough, this letter (or synopsis of letters) will show more
about the conflicts among the church at Corinth
and of Paul's alliances and competitions with factions

Reading the Gospel

Each Epiphany season, after the baptism of Jesus:
first disciples are called, first healing and teaching
this year of Matthew, we get a bit of John's version

Here's John in Bethany, defending his baptisms to Pharisees
the next day, he recognizes Jesus as if for the first time –
did he baptize Jesus, or just name him as Lamb, Son of God?

The next day, again, John and John's disciples standing still,
Jesus walks on by, and John sends his disciples after Jesus
to find out more about who and what they are seeking

After a whole day, one of the two, Andrew,
goes to get his brother Simon Peter
and Jesus gives him the 'Peter', 'Cephas', 'Rocky' name

We can dig through the layers of messianic names here,
clarifying how Jesus differs from John or from us,
and how he fits Isaiah's image of a suffering servant

I'd rather stop and ask about the stories of first disciples:
what about fishermen in boats in Galilee,
commanded by a stranger Jesus, out of the blue?

Does the Fourth Gospel not know the other 3?
Why tell such a contradictory version of the story?
Can both be factually accurate? Can both be true?

How do people first recognize *logos*, word in flesh,
the incarnation introduced already in John?
What prepares them/us to see with new eyes?

How, in turn, does one lead others to 'see' or recognize it,
as John led partway, Andrew followed up and invited,
and Peter is said somehow to be key in the chain?