

ORDER OF WORSHIP – Sunday, January 31, 2021 – EPIPHANY 4B

PRELUDE “Blessed Assurance – He Leadeth Me”

<https://vimeo.com/414538051>

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The annual meeting of the congregation will be held via ZOOM meeting today, January 31 at 11:00 a.m. Please plan on attending to ensure a quorum. A link to the meeting is provided at the end of this document. There is also a link to the meeting on the JCPC website:

<https://jcpconthehill.org/> Simply click on the red box titled ANNUAL CONGRGATIONAL MEETING.

IN-PERSON WORSHIP with Communion will be held at the church next Sunday. Come and worship or join us live with the meeting link that will be available on the jcpc website. A recording of the service will also be emailed following worship and posted to the website for viewing at your convenience.

CALL TO WORSHIP

By this I have known the presence of the Lord:

in the rising of the sun, in the smile of another’s face,
in the touch of a hand, or the sound of a laugh,
in the scent of a flower holding the promise of spring.

In this I have known the power of the Lord:

in the healing of hurts, in the forgiveness of sin,
in the giving of gifts beyond all expectation,
in the shower of love that comes from God’s Son.

Let us give thanks to the Lord with all our heart!

Let us worship our God, whose presence and power endures forever!

HYMN “Morning Has Broken”

<https://vimeo.com/33443607>

**Morning has broken like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!**

**Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where God's feet pass.**

**Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, Praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day!**

CALL TO CONFESSION ²

The One who pardons, heals, and strengthens all who repent calls us to name our failings and our hopes. Let us confess our sin before God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION ²

Holy and all-powerful God, who commands all spirits, comforts those in distress, and casts out destructive forces, we confess that we are unable to do your will.

We protect what is familiar and reject what is unknown. We admire those with courage but excuse ourselves when we falter from the truth. We forget that you are always with us, and that with you all things are possible.

Forgive us, lead us, make us new. Remove our desire to heed false prophets and show us your way; in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, Mother of us all.

Silence is kept.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS ²

The God who made you and knows your every thought hears you now and forgives you all your sin. You have been redeemed through Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior, who is Alpha and Omega, all in all.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

***GRATEFUL RESPONSE "Gloria Patri"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that the Scriptures we read will illumine our paths. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 111

¹Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

²Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.

³Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the LORD is gracious and merciful.

⁵He provides food for those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant.

⁶He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.

⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

⁸They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

⁹He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name.

¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.

Mark 1:21-28

²¹They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he [Jesus] entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God."

²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

SERMON “Set Loose in the World”

Rev. Marie Hanselman

In today’s gospel, Jesus goes to the synagogue with his newly recruited disciples – Simon, Andrew, James and John – and Jesus, after spending some time expounding on the scriptures, is called out by a man who is possessed by an unclean spirit – or was there more than one?

The story raises a lot of questions right from the very beginning.

What was it that Jesus said to the people at the synagogue that day? Mark never tells us what the remarkable teaching is that Jesus has brought to this little town of Capernaum.

When the man with the unclean spirit cries out to Jesus, the question he screams is “What have you to do with US? Have you come to destroy US?”

Who is the US? Is it the man and the unclean spirit? Is it a multitude of spirits that have taken up residence in the man’s body? Is US the man, the unclean spirit, and the other members of the synagogue in attendance that day?

And for that matter, what is a man with an unclean spirit even doing in the synagogue – a place where the faithful have come together in community to worship God? Or maybe that is exactly right where he belongs – along with all of the others – each possessed by their own demons.

And how come the unclean spirit recognizes Jesus as the Holy One of God while the others in worship that day are left asking, “What is this? A new teaching – with authority?”

In the beginning Mark tells us the people are ASTOUNDED at his teaching – the root of the word translated as ASTOUNDED is “to strike” and so we are left to sort out which of the possible meanings, 1) impressed, 2) bewildered, or 3) scandalized, applies to the people’s reaction that day – or perhaps a mix of all 3.

After the healing, Mark tells us the people were AMAZED or to elaborate upon the possible translations, they were dumbfounded to the point of becoming emotionally “stalled” (“shutting down”) – also implying a sense of wonder or terror.

In the course of 6 short verses, Mark has left us with a lot to sort out! And we are still just in the first chapter of this gospel – perhaps Mark has left us astounded and amazed as well, eager (and perhaps a bit reticent) to find out who this is Jesus is and what he is all about. But if we’ve been paying attention, Mark let the cat out of the bag right at the very beginning of his gospel, chapter 1, verse 1, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, THE SON OF GOD.”

Looking back, we see Jesus baptized by John in the Jordan river, and as he was coming up out of the water, Jesus “**saw the heavens TORN APART** and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And **a voice** came from heaven, “YOU ARE MY SON, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

So pleased, that in the very next verse the same Spirit drives him out into the wilderness for 40 days where he is tempted by Satan. Jesus returns from his desert “retreat” and begins his ministry in Galilee proclaiming, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe in the good news.”

As Jesus passes along the Sea of Galilee, he calls Simon and Andrew to follow him – and they drop everything – immediately – and follow him. The same scene plays out with James and John who are next to follow.

And Jesus with his first 4 disciples in tow, went to Capernaum and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.

What he taught, we are not told – only that the people were astounded – implying a mixed reaction of being impressed, bewildered, or scandalized – pretty much covers the gambit of possible reactions – some positive – some confused not knowing what to think – and some negative – something to the effect of “how dare he say those things!” (Whatever those things were.)

And then out of the blue (or maybe he’s been there all along) a man possessed by an unclean spirit raises his voice in fear and trepidation naming Jesus for who he is – The Holy One of God – and Jesus rebukes him – telling him to be silent – and commands that the unclean spirit come out!

And the spirit does come out – **convulsing the man and crying with a loud voice.** The man who has been caged – locked up in his own body – is freed from his bondage through the word of Jesus – the holy one of God.

At Jesus baptism **the heavens are torn apart and a voice** comes from the heavens – and sets God on the loose in Jesus.

In the healing of the man – in the convulsing cry of the unclean spirit – Jesus is set loose in the world.

At noon on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion, “darkness came over the land until three in the afternoon. At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice . . . then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” (Mark 15:33-37)

A rending of the heavens – the curtain of the temple – and another loud voice – the voice of God – the voice that will tear through the brokenness and sinfulness in the earth in anticipation of the opening of the tomb just three days later.

An empty tomb that will cause the women to run away in fear, but after the fear, they too must have found their own voices – to share the good news that the Holy One of God was once again set loose in the world.

The Holy One of God is still with us – loose in the world – through our own voices and acts of healing and compassion. Just as the women found the courage to overcome their fears and share the good news – we too through the gift of the Holy Spirit alive and well in the world and in our hearts, empowers us to lift up our voices on behalf of all of God’s children – to call out for justice and freedom and peace for all.

Let us pray.

*We want to be free of the shutters that keep you out, O God;
We long to open windows, to catch the warmth and light,
to feel the fresh breeze of your Spirit;
We yearn to set the darkness within us and around us to flight.*

*So, teach us, we pray,
to open windows of welcome
to all who have been rejected, persecuted and accused;
to open windows of listening
to all who have been misunderstood, silenced and dismissed;
to open windows of communication
to all whom we have viewed as enemies, as threats, or as insignificant;
to open the windows of humility
to a world that has been exploited through our greed, arrogance and
certainty;
to open the windows of hope
to all who are deprived, misplaced, diseased and despairing.*

*And may the windows we open be never closed again;
May the light we invoke, be always breaking through the clouds,
and entering even the darkest corners of our hearts.*

For Jesus’ sake.

Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH from A Brief Statement of Faith of the PC(USA)

In a broken and fearful world, the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

SPECIAL MUSIC "He Who Began a Good Work in You"

<https://vimeo.com/342166168>

He who began a good work in you, he who began a good work in you –
will be faithful to complete it, will be faithful to complete it.
He who started the work will be faithful to complete it in you.

If the struggle you're facing is slowly replacing the hope with despair,
or the process is long and you're losing your song in the night,
you can be sure that the Lord has his hands on you,
safe and secure he will never abandon you.
You are his treasure and he finds his pleasure in you.

He who began a good work in you, he who began a good work in you –
will be faithful to complete it, will be faithful to complete it.
He who started the work will be faithful to complete it in you.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE ²

Let pray for the needs of the world, saying, **Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.**

For the healing of Earth and all its creatures;
Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

For congregations that are in turmoil, for the healing of divisions between the followers of Christ Jesus;
Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

For leaders of nations, for those who have great wealth, for those who have too much power, for those who have destructive weapons, and for those who have none;

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

For those who are victims of others' idolatry, for children who have no one to listen to their cries for food and shelter, for parents who cannot answer the needs of their children, for peacemakers and diplomats, for those who give through charities, and for those who use the law to make policies for the greater good;

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

For all who are in pain and in need of care, especially for those we name now aloud or silently.

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Prayers for Nancy and Mario Milizia's family in California and their nanny, Wendy. Matt, Christina and their 1-year old son Alex were exposed this whole week to Covid through Alex's nanny, Wendy. Prayers for Wendy's healing and prayers that the family will not develop Covid.

A word of thanks from Pat Plassche for the cards, phone calls and other acts of sympathy upon Darwin's death.

Prayers for those known to us who face continuing health challenges:

Barb, Sarah, Linda, Carol, Rita, Judy.

Continued prayers of for those who are waiting expectantly for the gift of new life in infants soon to be born in the months ahead.

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

For the wisdom to fear you rightly, the power to withstand changes in our own lives that bring us closer to you, for the ability to give thanks for the people who have brought us to this time—our ancestors, teachers, pastors, and the martyrs of every age;

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

Into your hands we commend all those for whom we pray and those it would be easy to forget. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying,

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever.
Amen.

HYMN "Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service"

<https://vimeo.com/482133476>

**Lord, whose love through humble service Bore the weight of human need,
Who upon the cross, forsaken, Offered mercy's perfect deed.
We, Your servants, bring the worship Not of voice alone, but heart,
Consecrating to Your purpose Every gift that You impart.**

**Called from worship to Your service, Forth in Your dear name we go,
To the child, the youth, the aged, Love in living deeds to show;
Hope and health, goodwill and comfort, Counsel, aid, and peace we give,
That Your servants, Lord, in freedom May Your mercy know and live.**

CHARGE & BENEDICTION ²

Go into the world fully known by God.
Where there is fear, remember the authority of Jesus.
Where there is need of love, give it.
Where there is pain, bring peace.
For you are loved by the One who redeems, and freed to live by the Word of life.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with you now and abide with you always. Amen.

POSTLUDE "The Rainbow Connection"

<https://vimeo.com/419137233>

The Rainbow Connection. - Paul Williams, music & Kenneth Ascher, lyrics

Why are there so many
Songs about rainbows
And what's on the other side
Rainbows are visions
They're only illusions
And rainbows have nothing to hide
So we've been told and some chose to
Believe it
But I know they're wrong wait and see

Someday we'll find it
The Rainbow Connection
The lovers, the dreamers and me

Who said that every wish
Would be heard and answered
When wished on the morning star
Somebody thought of that
And someone believed it
And look what it's done so far
What's so amazing
That keeps us star gazing
What so we think we might see

Someday we'll find it
That Rainbow Connection
The lovers the dreamers and me

Have you been fast asleep
And have you heard voices,
I've heard them calling my name,
Is this the sweet sound that calls
The young sailors,
The voice might be one and the same.
I've heard it too many times to ignore it
It's something that i'm supposed to be,

Someday we'll find it
The rainbow connection...
The lovers, the dreamers and me
La lala la lala la la la lala la la la

²*Feasting on the Word, WORSHIP COMPANION, Liturgies for Year B, Volume 1*, edited by Kimberly Bracken Long, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville KY.

⁴<https://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com>; Thom M. Shuman

MORNING PRAYER ²

In the light of your new day, O God, I rise to greet you always on the path in front of me. Let me follow with integrity where you will lead. Give me courage to know the difference between what is false and what is true. Teach me to love my neighbor as you love me. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER ²

Heavenly Father, you are the power above all powers, the healer who knows our every need. You have guided me throughout this day and now give me sleep to renew my tired body and mind. Guard me and keep me in your care. Amen.

Marie Hanselman is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Annual Congregational Meeting

Time: Jan 31, 2021 11:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85150603721?pwd=ZlI4VzE3QnFoVjBHa0tqNE1lc2hkQT09>

Meeting ID: 851 5060 3721

Passcode: 893544

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