

Order of Service for January 31, 2021 - Epiphany 4

GATHERING

Gathering Song - 665, Rise, Shine, You People!

Rise, shine you people! Christ the Lord has entered
our human story; God in him is centred.

He comes to us, by death and hell surrounded. with grace unbounded.

See how he sends the powers of evil reeling;
he brings us freedom, light and life and healing.

All men and women, who by guilt are driven, are now forgiven.

Come, celebrate; your banners high unfurling,
your songs and prayers against the darkness hurling.
To all the world go out and tell the story of Jesus glory.

Tell how the Father sent the Son to save us.

Tell of the Son who life and freedom gave us.

Tell how the Spirit calls from every nation God's new creation.

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Greeting

P - The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be
with you all.

C - And also with you.

Litany

P - The light shines in the night of our lives.

C - The Epiphany of God has come.

P - The Magi said, "We have seen his star in the east."

C - The Epiphany of God has come.

P - A voice came from the heavens, "This is my son, the beloved."

C - The Epiphany of God has come.

P - Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me." Philip said to Nathaniel, "Come and see."

C - The Epiphany of God has come.

P - Jesus proclaimed, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near."

C - The Epiphany of God has come.

P - The crowd was amazed, saying, "A new teaching — with authority."

C - The Epiphany of God has come.

P - Jesus said, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there
also; for that is what I came to do."

C - The Epiphany of God has come.

P - The light shines in the night of our lives.

C - The Epiphany of God has come. Thanks be to God.

Prayer of the Day

The Lord is with us. Let us pray.

Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence, and continually reveal your Son as our Saviour. Bring wholeness to all that is broken, and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

C - Amen.

WORD

Gospel Acclamation

P - Alleluia. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.

C - For those who sat in the shadow of death, light has dawned. Alleluia

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:21-28

P - The holy gospel according to Mark.

C - Glory to you, O Lord.

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

Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and 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." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They 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." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The gospel of the Lord.

C - Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon - From our National Bishop, the Rev. Susan Johnson

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And greetings to you from your siblings in Christ from coast to coast to coast that make up this part of the family of God that we call the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Mark's gospel is really interesting. At least to me it is! It is so compact, so fast moving. It's like the Readers Digest condensed version of the gospels.

This morning's gospel lesson starts at only the 21st verse of the 1st chapter. But in the 20 verses prior we have heard John the Baptist proclaim prepare the way of the Lord, Jesus has been baptized, then tempted in the wilderness and then the first disciples have been called. That is compact writing!

Today's gospel lesson is also jam packed. Jesus teaches at the synagogue in Capernaum as one who has authority. A man approaches, full of an unclean spirit. The spirit taunts Jesus. Jesus rebukes the spirit and calls the spirit out. The crowd is amazed at both the teaching and the healing, and Jesus' fame spreads.

Jesus teaches with authority and the unclean spirit taunts him. What does this mean to us in our times when the phrase "fake news" has entered our regular conversation?

Jesus is not just any self-proclaimed prophet. He is the holy one of God. Even his enemies recognize this. When the unclean spirit speaks out, Jesus calls out what is not right. He names the evil.

Martin Luther King Jr. said “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

What do these statements of Jesus and of Martin Luther King Jr. mean to us right now in the light of the happenings that have been taking place at the capitol in the United States?

The current pandemic has become the focus of much of our lives. The temptation is for us to be very inward looking, focused on our bubble, and our work, and our provinces’ restrictions and numbers of cases and numbers of deaths.

But the realities of COVID call us to look out beyond ourselves to see the ways that the pandemic is pointing out and underlining disparities and structural inequities around the world and in Canada.

In Canada there are higher incidence rates of COVID in poorer and racialized communities. Many in those communities also experience more severe symptoms often due to underlying health conditions due to poverty.

Women in the workforce have faced more challenges than men have. They often bear the primary burden of childcare and homeschooling and have fallen farther behind in terms of the gendered pay gap.

There has also been an increase in domestic violence in Canada and around the world as lockdowns have increased both stress and proximity.

We may be concerned because there are worries about us not having enough vaccine to keep up with our capacity to vaccinate. Yet there are many developing countries that have still not received any vaccine. And recent news has shown that countries that are willing to pay above market value for vaccines are able to jump the queue and procure them faster.

When I think about these things and then look back on today’s text, Jesus’ actions cause me to ask these questions.

First what is the evil, what is the injustice, what are the evil spirits that need to be named and confronted around us?

Second, how can we, like Martin Luther King Jr. and like Jesus “stop being silent about things that matter.” For to do this is to participate in the new life that Jesus promises us.

It is hard for us to know how and when to speak out. We would usually rather wait for things to change and problems to go away.

But speaking out to injustice, speaking out to lies, is part of Jesus’ command to love our neighbours. It is a way we show our commitment to the common good. It is a way that we can follow the way of Jesus and live by his example.

I recently heard Anglican Archbishop Linda Nicholls talk about the moral injury that people are experiencing. So many things happening around us that break our understanding of what our moral code is. Even after the pandemic ends, we will need to continue working to address this moral injury. We will need to follow Jesus in speaking out against injustice, working for healing, and building up healthy community. But we are not alone.

In this time of Epiphany we begin by remembering the wise ones who followed a star to find the Christ child, the light of the world. In the season of Epiphany we reflect on how we are called to follow and share that light. Jesus continues to call to each of us to follow him and sends the spirit to nurture the gifts we have been given to work to build God’s reign among us. That call is the source of our light, our hope, our love and our strength. Amen.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Hymn of the Day - 312, Jesus, Come! For We Invite You

Jesus, come! for we invite you, guest and master, friend and Lord;
now, as once at Cana's wedding, speak and let us hear your word:
lead us through our need or doubting, hope be born and joy restored.

Jesus, come! transform our pleasures, guide us into paths unknown;
bring your gifts, command your servants, let us trust in you alone:
though your hand may work in secret, all shall see what you have done.

Jesus, come! in new creation, heav'n brought near by pow'r divine;
give your unexpected glory, changing water into wine:
rouse the faith of your disciples — come, our first and greatest Sign!

Jesus, come! surprise our dullness, make us willing to receive
more than we can yet imagine, all the best you have to give:
let us find your hidden riches, taste your love, believe, and live!

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Water Creed

I believe in almighty God, Creator and Divider of waters: Salt and fresh, running and still,
falling and frozen and fog; holy liquid, without which we would not be.

I believe in Jesus, the Christ, Holy Child of God, who was infused by the Spirit into the
waters of creation, who was nurtured and grown in Mary's womb water, who entered the river-
water with John, who restored the storm-water to calm, and who shared living water with the
woman at the well. This was the One who was condemned by the political sea-scape of the day,
whose blood-water was spilled on the cross, whose breath-water was released back to God, and
who was placed in the ground to return his life-water to the earth. But who, after three waterless,
lifeless days, returned, splashing us with heavenly identity and holy promise.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, who hovered over the waters, who pours God's very self into
us, who unites us with each other in the regenerating flow of love, who restores our parched souls
with reconciliation, who promises life, and who pledges that we will never be thirsty again.
Amen.

Prayers of the People

A - Walking in the dawning light of Christ, we offer our prayers for the world God loves, the
church God calls, and for all people according to their needs.

[Short pause]

A - God of the unclean, you enter our reality with strong grace and forceful welcome. Open us to
your purifying presence. God of light,

C - Shine in us and through us.

A - God of the unclean, we confess that we cling to things which do not help, which interfere,
which get in the way of our responding to your call. Cleanse us and free us to follow more
faithfully. God of light,

C - Shine in us and through us.

A - God of the unclean, Jesus spoke with authority, and your new creation became visible. May our ears hear, our eyes see, and our hands take part in the new things you are bringing. God of light,

C - Shine in us and through us.

A - God of the unclean, unburden your church from the weight of fear, of assumptions, or previous authorities. Open us to the call you are extending today, and send us into your world with joyful anticipation. God of light,

C - Shine in us and through us.

A - God of the unclean, you come to *all* who are unclean - the sick, the stranger, the fearful, the addicted and the isolated. Use your people to touch all in need with your healing love, including those we name before you.

[Long pause]

God of light,

C - Shine in us and through us.

A - God of the unclean, you declare us clean, you declare us whole, you declare us capable.

Strengthen our faith, so that we may respond as your faithful people. God of light,

C - Shine in us and through us.

P - We ask all this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray,

Lord's Prayer

C - 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

SENDING

Benediction

P - God the creator strengthen you,
Jesus (†) the beloved fill you,
and the Holy Spirit the comforter keep you in peace.

C - Amen.

Sending Song - 655, Son of God, Eternal Saviour

Son of God, eternal Saviour, source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us hallows all our human race,
you our head, who, throned in glory, for your own will ever plead:
fill us with your love and pity, heal our wrong, and help our need.

As you, Lord, have lived for others, so may we for others live.
Freely have your gifts been granted; freely may your servants give.
Yours the gold and yours the silver, yours the wealth of land and sea;
we but stewards of your bounty held in solemn trust will be.

Come, O Christ, and reign among us, King of Love, and Prince of peace;
hush the storm of strife and passion, bid its cruel discords cease.
By your patient years of toiling, by your silent hours of pain,
quench our fevered thirst of pleasure, stem our selfish greed of gain.

Son of God, eternal Saviour, source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us hallows all our human race:
by your praying, by your willing that your people should be one,
grant, oh, grant our hope's fruition: here on earth your will be done.

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Dismissal

P - Go in peace. Jesus declares you clean.

C - Thanks be to God!

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