



The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell
326 Bloomfield Avenue
Caldwell, NJ 07006
973-228-0310
www.firstprescaldwell.org

January 17, 2021

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

REFLECTION

"Only great dreams and the sacrificial energy to achieve them can restore our nation to health. Today, we need to ask ourselves as a nation: "What is our dream? What are we living for?" A person and a nation thrive on vision and possibility, not fear and negativity. Here, the prophet calls us to dream, to imagine an alternative reality, and then embody it in daily life. Here Martin Luther King provides a pathway through our current national wilderness."

-The Rev. Dr. Bruce Epperly

PRELUDE

"I Surrender All" & "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder"

arr. Craig Curry

WORDS OF WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP & OPENING PRAYER

HYMN No. 339, St. 1 & 3

"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

LIFT EVERY VOICE

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies;
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;
Shadowed beneath thy hand,
May we forever stand.
True to our God,
True to our native land.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(In Unison)*

God of Justice and Mercy, we confess that privilege allows us to not recognize the plight of those around us. We confess that the assumptions we have from our experiences shade how we view the struggles of others. We judge based on what we know, instead of learning from others views and understandings. Forgive us when we unintentionally cause harm by our assumptions and fail to recognize the ways others are oppressed by our actions, words, and most importantly, by our silent indifference. Call us into repentance and accountability. Help us to listen to the prophets of old as well as the prophets among us today. Guide us into thoughtful action to change our ways and dismantle the systems of oppression that we live in. In Jesus' name, who lived and died for us, and lives again, breaking the chains of sin and death, we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

There is nothing on earth or beyond death that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are forgiven. We are loved. We are reconciled to God. Amen

HYMN No. 750

“Goodness Is Stronger than Evil”

GOODNESS IS STRONGER

Goodness is stronger than evil;
Love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness;
Life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours; victory is ours
Through God who loves us.
Victory is ours; victory is ours
Through God who loves us.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

MINUTE FOR MISSION

MLK, Jr. Day of Service Project

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Shed a Little Light”

James Taylor

EPISTLE LESSON

Roman 3:9-18

GOSPEL READING

John 1:35-51

SERMON

“The Danger of Certainty”

Rev. William Schram

HYMN No. 834

“Precious Lord, Take My Hand”

PRECIOUS LORD

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s last words before he was shot were spoken to Ben Branch, a musician who was to lead the music that night at a fund raiser. They would sing a special song since it was his favorite and Dr. King said, "Ben, play "Precious Lord" in the meeting tonight. Play it real pretty." The hymn was sung at his funeral.

Precious Lord, take my hand;
Lead me on, let me stand;
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light;
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear,
Precious Lord, linger near;
When my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call,
Hold my hand lest I fall;
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

PRAYER & 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; 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

“God of Love, We’ve Known Division”

November 18, 2020 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7 D (“God Whose Giving Knows No Ending”)

God of love, we’ve known division and we’ve seen its awful cost.
We have struggled as a nation, and there’s much that we have lost.
We have been a house divided — and, divided, we can’t stand.
May our nation be united; give us peace throughout this land.

Turn us, Lord, from what divides us — fear that drives us far apart,
greed that leads to great injustice, racist ways that break your heart.
May we seek what brings together — hearts that bear each other’s pain,
care and mercy toward our neighbors, love that welcomes strangers in.

May we all, in conversation, speak the truth and listen well.
May we hear, across this nation, stories others have to tell.
May we learn from other cultures and be blessed by their worldview;
May we serve with one another — loving others, loving you.

You have challenged us to goodness; you have shown a kinder way.
It’s your love that now inspires us as we seek a better day.
May we end our harsh division; may we stop the hate and fear.
Make us one, Lord, as a nation; may we be united here.

Tune: The Sacred Harp, 1844; attributed to Benjamin Franklin White (“God Whose Giving Knows No Ending”)

Text: Copyright © 2020 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.

Permission is given for free use of this hymn in local churches.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

“Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In”

arr. Michael Hassell

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Rev. William Schram

Rev. Barbara Piercy

Sue Jones & Noel Piercy

Erin Boger & Micki Hardenberg, Soloist & Cantor

John Lenis, Bass & Jesse Gerbasi, Drums

Ray Liptak & Rob Thiemann, AV Engineers

SERMON QUESTIONS FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 17TH

1. When have you acted like Nathanael and reacted out of negative assumptions?
2. When have you accepted an opportunity to “Come and see?” What new understanding has that brought you?
3. When have you resisted an invitation to “Come and see” and stuck to an already formed opinion?
4. Bill drew a distinction between being or not being individually racist and being impacted by the ongoing effect of racism in our lives. Is that a helpful distinction for you?
5. How do Paul’s words from Romans relate to you and your self-awareness?
6. Do you trust the grace of Christ enough to be honest before God?