

Church of the Divine Love

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

January 31, 2021 10:15 A.M.

Morning Prayer, Rite I

Please observe silence after altar candles are lit

All pages refer to The Book of Common Prayer

Entrance Hymn #335 – I am the bread of life (vs. 1, ,2,4)

Opening Sentence for Epiphany page 38

Confession of Sin page 41

The Invitatory and Psalter page 42

Venite page 44

The First Lesson: **Deuteronomy 18:15-20**

The Psalm Appointed: **Psalm 111**

The Second Lesson: **1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

Gradual Hymn #315 – Thou, who at the first Eucharist

The Gospel Lesson: **Mark 1:21-28**

The Sermon

Welcome and Announcements

Offertory Hymn #440 – Blessed Jesus, at thy word

The Apostles Creed page 53

The Lord's Prayer page 54

The Suffrages page 55

The Collects page 56

Petitions and Thanksgivings of the People page 57

For Strength and Confidence page 459

#49 – For the Aged page 830

#47 – For Young Persons	page 829
#62 – Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
The General Thanksgiving	page 58
A Prayer of St. Chrysostom	page 59
Dismissal	page 59
Dismissal Hymn #544 – Jesus shall reign	

Sermon Sunday January 31, 2021

Deuteronomy 18: 15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13; Mark 1: 21-28

May the words of my mouth be acceptable to you, oh Lord, my rock, and my redeemer!

Dear people of God,

The Gospel according to Mark demonstrates the power of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. Mark's Gospel is all about mission. This mission of love and justice in the world includes addressing ecological, moral, economic, and social ills. The focus is, therefore, communal, as relationships are of primary importance. However, it is not only human relationships that matter but also humanity's relationship with all of creation. Mark presented a countercultural view of the gospel then and continues to gift us with it today.

"He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." The men in the synagogue have witnessed a miracle. This Jesus has an authority unlike anything they have seen before or will ever see again. Only the Messiah can open our eyes and hearts and minds and cast out the demons that separate us from God's will for us. And what are those demons? They are the forces that take hold of us, that possess us, that undermine our full humanity and make us seem less than the reflections of God's perfect image we are meant to be. Demons can be very persuasive. They trick us into believing that we are weak, or defective, or irredeemable.

This event takes place in a holy place—a synagogue. But it also takes place in another holy place—within the human body. What has been profaned by evil has been made righteous by Emmanuel—God with Us. And, in this instance, we see healing take place alongside teaching. After Jesus astounds with his teaching, he provides an even greater demonstration of his authority through this miraculous act of deliverance. What if our worship preparation included making space for miracles to take place? What if our ministry and mission were framed in the expectation of the miraculous? We are living in a time in need of the miraculous, in need of healing. Of course, healing needs repair—that laundry list that Jesus recited in another holy

place. In a time when the world continues to struggle against a pandemic and the United States, among other nations, is called to confront the pervasive evil of white supremacy and nationalism, healing can only take place when evil is confronted, silenced, and cast out. There is a whole segment of the population who have been possessed by deliberate misinformation, hostility to science, and white nationalism. The inauguration of a new administration does not change that.

We all struggle with unclean spirits. Not little red imps that hop around with tiny pitchforks. Our unclean spirits are the forces that pull us away from the path of Christ. Christ calls us to be peacemakers, unclean spirits sow discord and violence. Christ calls us to love our neighbors; unclean spirits promote suspicion and selfishness. Christ calls us to forgive; unclean spirits thrive on grudges and vengeance. Christ tells us not to worry, that every hair on our heads is counted; unclean spirits whisper that we must work harder and look better and earn more to be worthy of love.

I have my demons; I'm sure you have yours. But we need not fear, because our unclean spirits don't stand a chance against the Good News of Jesus Christ. Grace and mercy and wholeness are ours for the taking because he gives them to us, just as he gives himself for us. Our experiences of restoration, of freedom from our personal demons, are not always as quick or dramatic as in today's Gospel reading; but they are no less life changing. There is much Good News here for us today -- first, that we are not our demons. We are so much more than the ugliest parts of ourselves. Jesus sees us and knows us for who we really are—precious creations of God. Christ looked at the man in the synagogue that day and saw past the ugliness to the essential goodness of a child of God. In our moments of greatest despair, when we feel utterly alone, when we can see no light at the end of our tunnels of struggle and sadness, we must remember that for us, just as for the man in the synagogue, Christ changes everything. Christ's authority is our refuge, our balm, and our strength. There are, of course, other great teachers and thinkers and leaders, others who have changed the world, others of importance and authority. But the authority of the Messiah, the authority on display that day in the synagogue, is unlike any other.

For us as Christians, Jesus remains the ultimate authority. Like the people of Capernaum, we recognize his authority, the authority of his teaching and his deeds, the authority of his life, death, and resurrection. That is why we confess Jesus not just as our teacher but as our Lord. We are happy to submit to his authority, to his lordship, because we recognize that in doing so, we will have life to the full, and, like the man in the gospel, be freed of those spirits that prevent us from becoming the person God intends us to be. There can be great reluctance today to submit to anyone. The value of personal autonomy is highly prized and sought after. Yet, it is not possible to live without submitting to some authority even if it is the authority of the self. What matters is to submit to the right authority and today's gospel suggests that such authority is to be found in the person of Jesus.

It's not enough to acknowledge the power and authority of Jesus. We must submit to Him and we must also share His message with the world. It is only through Him that others can be forgiven of their sins and be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God. It is only through repentance and faith that salvation is available. We must be faithful to share this message. God shows up and liberates and heals broken people. God is HERE. The Holy Spirit is at work to release the captives. This is a good news story! May God meet us here, set us free, and transform our lives. **AMEN!**

Prayer for Grace and Favor in the New Year:

Dear God, we ask that you provide for our needs, we ask for your grace and favor. We pray for your blessings to cover us; we pray that you would help us to prosper and make every plan that you have birthed in our heart to succeed. We pray that others would take notice of your goodness and could not help but say, "these are the ones that the Lord has blessed." Shine your light in us, through us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. Set your way before us. May all your plans succeed. We may reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing. In Jesus Name, Amen.

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Barbara Curran	Phil and Family
Dina Palkowski	Lois Kessler
Frances & Donna Mongelli	Bernie Walther
Nathan Treadwell	Margaret
Tyler Gorman	Kim
Chris Dickson	Rachael
Michael Echevarria	Caesar
Donny	Bill Conklin
Michael & Family	Anthony Paribello
Martinisi Family	Edward Lent
Matt Marricco	Kate Jones
Kathleen	Del
Irene	Girard Bishop
Warren	Donna

Children who are ill:

Franklin Tenesaca	Ciara Berbeck
Michael	Christopher
Gabriel	Emily

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bishop's Directive – When attending services we are all required to wear a masks, use hand sanitizer, sign in with name and phone number for tracing purposes, and only sit in pews with decals

The Thrift Shop will be closed for the month of February.

4 EPIHANY

10:15 AM MORNING PRAYER

(also on zoom)

11:15 AM PARISH ANNUAL METING

(also on zoom)

MONDAY

8:00 PM AA MEEING

WEDNESDAY

7:00 PM AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY

8:00 PM AA MEETING

5 EPIPHANY

10:15 AM MORNING PRAYER

(also on zoom)

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN