



Valley Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dear Friend in Christ,

Today marks the first Sunday of the church season of Christmas. While in popular culture the Christmas season often begins the instant the Halloween decorations come down, the church tradition has long been for the season of Christmas to extend twelve days past Christmas Day, all the way to Epiphany (the day of the visitation by the Magi). That's where the song the Twelve Days of Christmas comes from! On this Sunday, I am happy to share with you Matthew's Christmas narrative, which is much briefer than Luke's but is still filled with plenty of meaning for us to take with us into 2021.

Please use following phone numbers and links between 10:15am and 10:30am. You can join in one of two ways:

By computer, smart phone or tablet:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86757133623?pwd=OTFUQWJvU21MMmR6bkY5SitpelR1UT09>

By Phone: 1 (312) 626 6799 ID 867 5713 3623, Passcode 205879

(If you need a live link to the Worship link, you can go to the homepage of our website at www.vccbhm.org with the passcode 205879 OR click on "Links to Zoom" then the Sunday Worship link.)

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Christ's and yours,
Pastor Eric

Valley Christian Church

First Sunday of Christmas

December 27, 2020

PRELUDE

"The Birthday of a King"

*Margaret Cox
Pianist*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: He was in the world, and the world came into being through him.

People: Yet the world did not know him.

Leader: But to all who received him, who believed in his name,

People: He gave power to become children of God.

Leader: Who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man,

People: But of God.

(John 1:10, 12-13, NRSV)

*John Neville
Worship Leader*

HYMN OF PRAISE

"Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"

Good Christian friends, rejoice

With heart and soul and voice

Listen now to what we say

News, news, Jesus Christ is born today

Ox and ass before him bow and he is in the manger now

Christ is born today, Christ is born today

Good Christian friends, rejoice

With heart and soul and voice

Now you need not fear the grave

Peace, peace, Jesus Christ was born to save

Calls you one, calls you all to gain the everlasting hall

Christ was born to save, Christ was born to save

INVOCATION

*John Neville
Worship Leader*

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

God of new birth, as we gather around the manger to worship the newborn Christ, we bring with us the trappings of our own lives—our joys and concerns, our worries and our celebrations. We lay them before you, next to the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, that we might be our whole selves before you. We pray to you on behalf of the people we have named aloud and the people and communities who are in the silence of our souls, as we lift up to you the ones who we have named aloud at this time...

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Go, Tell it on the Mountain" Duet

*Bill and Mary Ellen
Caughran*

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:18-25

*John Neville
Worship Leader*

MESSAGE

"Dreaming of a First Christmas"

See insert for message excerpt

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

HYMN

"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

*Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er
all the earth. You who sang creation's story*

Now proclaim Messiah's birth

Come and worship, come and worship

Worship Christ the newborn king

*Shepherds in the fields abiding, watching o'er
Your flocks by night. God with us is now residing*

Yonder shines the infant light

Come and worship, come and worship

Worship Christ the newborn king

Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions

Beam afar. Seek the great desire of nations

You have seen the natal star.

Come and worship, come and worship

Worship Christ the newborn king

SHARING OUR OFFERING WITH GOD

Share your financial offering with the church by mail or bring it by the church office. Thank you for your love gifts.

*John Neville
Worship Leader*

**OFFERTORY
PRAYER**

**CALL TO
COMMUNION**

May we remember that after Christmas came the journey into Egypt, and the Holy Family needed sustenance for that journey just as we do for ours.

**COMMUNION
HYMN**

What Child is This"

*What child is this who laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping
This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing
Haste haste to bring him laud, the babe the son of Mary*

*So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh
Come rich and poor, to own him
The king of kings salvation brings
Let loving hearts enthrone him
This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing
Haste haste to bring him laud, the babe the son of Mary*

**COMMUNION
PRAYER**

Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer

**HOLY
COMMUNION**

Partake of the holy communion (bread, juice, or whatever is available to you)

**WORDS OF
INSTITUTION**

Hear the words of Jesus when He said, "Take and eat, this is my body, broken for you. Take and drink, this is the cup of the covenant poured out for you."

BENEDICTION

May the God who gave you voice to sing the Good News of Christ's birth in worship send you forth to keep sharing that Good News. And may the blessing of the Lord be with you on this day and on all days. Amen.

POSTLUDE

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

*John Neville
Worship Leader*

Rev. Dr. Eric Acheson

*Katelyn Clark
Elder*

Rev. Dr. Eric Acheson

*Margaret Cox
Pianist*

You are warmly invited to remain in our Zoom worship space for some online fellowship time following the postlude.



O sing
unto the
LORD
a new song:
sing
unto the
LORD,
all the
earth

MEDITATION

December 27, 2020

“Dreaming of a First Christmas,” Matthew 1:18-25

As a kid, I loved having snow on Christmas. Loved, loved, loved it. I lived right next door to my elementary school—you just had to go down a short slope behind my backyard—and when it snowed, I’d take my inner tube and go sledding there. The key was being able to brake before you went crashing headlong into the building.

Now, as an adult who has to clean snow and ice off of his car just to go drive in that snow and ice, I am dreaming of literally anything else but a white Christmas. Give me bitter cold, fine, or give me rain, or even just give me good old-fashioned grayness, just do not give me snow (or ice, for that matter). I do not dream of white Christmases anymore, except in my nightmares.

But you may still dream of snow on Christmas, and I am not here to take those dreams away from you. Dreaming is a fundamental part of the Christmas experience. As children, it is part of the magic. As adults, it is what helps restore our frazzled brains after helping make the magic. And for Matthew, it is integral to the entire story, from start to finish. Joseph is told in a dream not to divorce Mary, but to remain her beloved and raise the Christ child together. He is then told in a dream to flee Herod’s purges by escaping to Egypt. The Magi are warned in a dream not to return to Herod after they worship Jesus. And once Herod is dead, Joseph is once again spoken to in his dreams, first to return to Israel, and then to make his home in Nazareth.

Dreams narrate almost every pivot of Matthew’s Christmas story. They give understanding, and from that understanding comes protection from existential dangers to Joseph, Mary, Jesus, and the Magi alike. Matthew’s narrative, in its totality, is not so much about the birth itself—although that is what we are focusing on today—for that part of the story takes just seven verses. The rest is about keeping the newborn Christ alive and safe, and dreaming plays a vital role in that mission.

So, for a few minutes today, let’s talk together about the nature of dreaming, of what it can do for us, inspire in us, and what it can do—or, in some cases, cause us to leave undone. New years are prime moments for such dreaming, and when we have a new minister as well, there is both a need and, I hope, an enthusiasm for a bit of dreaming.