

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. All who are able, please rise for our responsive reading, Psalm 96. "O sing unto the Lord a new song. Sing unto the Lord all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name. Show forth his salvation from day to day."

Congregation:

"Sing unto the Lord, bless his name. Show forth his salvation from day to day."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods."

Congregation:

"For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. Bring an offering, and come into his courts."

Congregation:

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. Bring an offering, and come into his courts."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth. The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously."

Congregation:

"Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth. The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful and all that is there. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord."

Congregation:

"Let the field be joyful and all that is there. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice."

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"Before the Lord, for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(singing).

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

"Sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord a new song." Out of the crucible of racism, pain, dehumanization, subjugation, marginalization, discrimination, enslavement and death inflicted upon Black bodies, Black persons responded with a new song. They responded with a hermeneutic of freedom and proclamation in the North American context. Although a new form of oppression was invented, one that was different from the older models of slavery and antiquity, a model steeped in the formation and creation of race, enslaved Africans sang a new song.

Although the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade database estimates that 12.5 million persons were forcibly taken from their homeland, and placed into a system of dehumanization and subjugation, they sang a new song. Through the middle passage, regardless of social status or political affiliations, all enslaved Africans aboard the ships were treated as inferior, but they sang a new song. Kings, princes, governors, tribal leaders, spiritual leaders, elders, children, women and men were faced with this unnerving reality that they were now property, but they sang a new song.

They arrived in America as a commodity that would work in the fields, be sold on auction blocks and be treated as inhuman. However, they sang new songs, spirituals. Spirituals that refused to allow pain to extinguish their souls and spirits. Black persons responded with spirituals, a song of survival, a song of hope, a song of freedom, a song of promise. They sang a new song. They sang spirituals that would later become the blues, gospel, jazz and protest songs of the '60s. Amid all that they face, they sang new songs.

They sang a freedom with weary throats. They proclaimed life and betterment. Black people's cry for freedom amid torture, oppression, rape, beating, dehumanization and control were felt through the spirituals. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, worship and song gave enslaved black people dignity. In a system that legally defined black peoples as inhuman and as a commodity, Black folks resisted through spirituals. These spirituals borrowed the words and stories of biblical texts and characters, with this tinder of hope and of freedom.

They sung songs that often had a double meaning that went beyond other worldly eschatology. The lyrics may have had the words, Canaan Land, Jordan, promised land, heaven, river and camp meeting, but they had deeper meanings. Meanings that not just we are going to go to heaven on the other side, but heaven just may be right here. Maybe the river may not be the river that Revelation talks about, but

maybe this river may be that I'm going to cross over the Mississippi River, and I won't have to answer to Massa any longer. Songs like, (singing). Songs like, (singing).

They sung songs and brought the Bible to life, and they saw themselves and characters like Daniel, believing that God could deliver them out of enslavement. (Singing). They sang a new song in chains, believing that one day freedom would come with songs like, (singing). Even when it felt like there was no hope, they sang of freedom. (Singing). Can't you see them swaying their bodies? Can't you see them moving? (Singing).

Like the people of God in the Psalter, they sang a new song in a strange land, believing, hoping that freedom would come. As we celebrate Black History Week here at the Memorial Church and Black History Month, may we be reminded of their new song, and may you and I join in the chorus of freedom. Please stand as you are able and let us pray.

Loving God may the song of love, the notes of freedom, the melodies of peace, and the music of emancipation forever live on in our hearts. May we forever remember that we are one, Black and white, all colors, all nationalities, all ethnicities. And may we continue to sing the song of our God, we will indeed overcome. Together let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying, 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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Now let us sing hymn Precious Lord, Take my hand, number 344, found in your hymnal.

Congregation/Choir:

(Singing).

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

May the road rise to meet you. May the wind always be at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face. May the rain fall soft upon your feels. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of Her hands. May you go forth singing a new song, a new song that confronts evil, speaks of love and justice, refuses to bend to the status quo, a song that speaks of freedom. Go in peace singing a new song.

Congregation:

Amen.