



# Valley Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dear Friend in Christ,

I am delighted to share with all of you the second week of our autumn sermon series, “The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness.” Today, we will be tackling the question “What about injustice?” by reading the first part of the story of Moses encountering God’s voice at the burning bush in Exodus 3. It is a well-known and well-loved story, with a theological depth and richness that continues to speak to me. Perhaps it does to you as well.

If you have not had the opportunity to join us for worship, I encourage you to do so this Sunday. The following phone numbers and links are the ones to dial between 10:15am and 10:30am. You can join in one of two ways:

**By telephone (audio only)**

1 (312) 626 6799

Meeting ID: 867 5713 3623

**By video with computer, tablet, or smartphone – click the link below**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86757133623>

(if you need a live link you can go to the homepage of our website at [www.vccbhm.org](http://www.vccbhm.org))

Please remember that next Sunday Zoom will require you to enter a passcode when dialing in. The information and links will be on our website and also in your bulletin packet.

I look forward to seeing you there!

Christ’s and yours, Pastor Eric

# Valley Christian Church

## Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost

September 20, 2020

### PRELUDE

*"I Worship You, Almighty God/Holy, Holy, Holy"*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high.

People: I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

Leader: But I have calmed and quieted my soul.

People: Like a child with its mother, my soul is like the child that is with me.

Leader: O Israel, hope in the Lord.

People: From this time on and forevermore.

(Psalm 131, NRSV)

### HYMN OF PRAISE

*"My Life Flows On"*

*My life flows on in endless song*

*Above earth's lamentation*

*I hear the clear, though far off hymn*

*That hails a new creation*

*No storm can shake my inmost calm*

*While to that rock I'm clinging*

*Since love is Lord of heaven and earth*

*How can I keep from singing?*

*Through all the tumult and the strife*

*I hear the music ringing*

*It finds an echo in my soul*

*How can I keep from singing?*

*No storm can shake my inmost calm*

*While to that rock I'm clinging*

*Since love is Lord of heaven and earth*

*How can I keep from singing?*

### INVOCATION

Eternal and gracious God, we seek your justice in a world ruled by our limited justice, your love in a world that stirs up hatred, and your perfection in a world that

is still so imperfect. In these moments of worship, we seek your strength to respond with love and righteousness. Grant us this strength to follow you anew as we turn our hearts and minds to you this morning. Amen.

### SCRIPTURE

Exodus 3:1-10

### MEDITATION

"The Whatabouts: What About Injustice?"  
See Insert for Meditation

### HYMN

*"Go Down, Moses"*

*When Israel was in Egypt's land, let my people go  
Oppressed so hard they couldn't stand, let my people go*

*Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go*

*No more shall they in bondage toil, let my people go  
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil, let my people go*

*Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go*

*The Lord told Moses what to do, let my people go  
To lead the Hebrew children through, let my people go*

*Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go*

### SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

Loving and just God, we bring to you our prayers and petitions out of our faith in you, out of hope that through our faith, as your Son teaches us, all things remain possible. We turn to you in the possibility of comfort where there is pain, healing where there is injury, and celebration where there is need to rejoice. We humbly ask your presence especially for those whom we have named here today, as we lift them up each to you by name...

### CALL TO COMMUNION

May we remember how Christ suffered the injustice of arrest, show trials, and execution after partaking in this supper, and how His resurrection conquered that



injustice.

**COMMUNION  
HYMN**

*“Seek Ye First”*

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God  
And God's righteousness  
And all these things shall be given unto you  
Allelu, alleluia*

*Ask and it shall be given unto you  
Seek and ye shall find  
Knock and the door shall be opened unto you  
Allelu, alleluia*

**COMMUNION  
PRAYER**

Pray 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.”

**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.

**OFFERTORY  
PRAYER**

Loving and grace-giving God, we offer our gifts to you  
not because we must, but because we may, on behalf of  
our hopes for a kingdom of justice and righteousness  
that we can help contribute towards with these gifts. We  
ask your blessing upon them as we dedicate them to  
your name and service. Amen.

**BENEDICTION**

Now may the God who has given you a heart to feel  
love and a conscience to feel injustice set you forth in  
the world that it might increase in love and decrease in  
injustice, and may the blessing of that same God be with  
you on this day and on all days. Amen.

THIS  
IS THE  
*Day*

WHICH THE  
LORD HATH  
MADE: WE WILL  
REJOICE AND  
BE GLAD IN IT.

*Psalm 118:24*

## MEDITATION

Sunday, September 20, 2020

“What About Injustice?” Exodus 3:1-10

“The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness,”  
Week Two

If you ever want a ridiculously labor-intensive way of forcing yourself to revisit books you have not read in years, I cannot recommend highly enough a cross-country move. The task of packing and unpacking our dozens of boxes of books put in my hands a number of volumes that have lived a decade or more on my shelf, yet had not seen my eyes in many years. One of those books, *Living Justice*, is a memoir by a husband-and-wife pair of playwrights, Jessica Blank and Eric Jensen, about their writing of the play *The Exonerated*, which tells the real-life stories of five men and one woman who were wrongfully sentenced to death and imprisoned on death row for murders they never committed.

Because of the geographic nature of states with the death penalty compared to states without it—or that impose it sparingly—much of the stories Blank and Jensen collected came from here, in the Deep South, and they write movingly and humorously about being New Yorkers immersing themselves—sometimes successfully, sometimes not—in the culture of Georgia, Mississippi, and here in Birmingham, where one of their interviewees, Bo Cochran, was born, raised, and lived until he died four years ago.

Blank and Jensen’s story gave me some succor as I began my life here with all of you, thinking that if a pair of Yankees can hack it here in Alabama, I should be just fine, because Kansas sure isn’t New York City, either. Revisiting their story prompted me to also pick up my copy of *The Exonerated*, which begins and ends with the words of Delbert Tibbs, a Black, seminary-educated writer and activist who spent three years on Florida’s death row for a rape and murder he had nothing to do with. He says:

(over)

*This is not the place for thoughts that do not end in concreteness. It is not easy to be open or too curious.*

*It is dangerous to dwell too much on things.*

*To wonder who or why or when, to wonder how is dangerous.*

*How do we, the people, get outta this hole, what’s the way to fight. Might I do what Richard and Ralph and Langston ‘n them did?*

*It is not easy to be a poet here. Yet I sing. I sing.*

Delbert revisits this thought as the final words of the play, and see if you can hear what shifted:

*This is the place for thoughts that do not end in concreteness.*

*It is necessary to be curious.*

*And dangerous to dwell here, to wonder why and how and when is dangerous.*

*But that’s how we get out of this hole.*

*It is not easy to be a poet here. Yet I sing. We sing.*

At the other end of the exodus, after the parting of the Red Sea, Moses’s sister Miriam sings. Delbert Tibbs repeats, at both the beginning and end of *The Exonerated*, “Yet I sing.” Praise of God during or after experiencing injustice is a very common occurrence in Scripture—including in song. In Christianity, this tradition goes back centuries!

Recall how Paul likens faith to the “armor of God” in Ephesians 6:11. Armor is protective, but it doesn’t make someone invincible, either—it cushions blows and takes a potentially devastating blow and makes it easier to withstand. How can your faith give you a bit of cushion to fall back on, even as the world might deal us a deeply painful blow in the form of injustice?

God wants us to not merely withstand or endure injustice. Like Moses before Pharaoh, God hopes we will rebuke it. In such a divisive time as this, how and when we choose to speak up for justice may feel difficult or even scary--which, if we continue reading the Exodus story through chapters 3 and 4, we see Moses himself felt!