

To Pastor Jesse Brown Jr. of Christ Temple Community Church, to Rev Dr. Jacque Franklin of First Congregational United Church of Christ, to Lead Minister Benjamin Broadbent, the Lead Minister of this First Church, and the members and officers of the Colorado Springs Branch NAACP, to each of you – my sisters and brothers in Christ and in Community – Good Morning.

Happy and Blessed Jubilee Day.

We come together today, to observe and pay reverence and celebrate something that happened 149 years ago today. It is an anniversary, a 149th Anniversary of the signing of a document that people stayed up all night to learn about. On Dec. 31, 1862, I can just see my ancestors and your ancestors, the nations, perhaps the world, waiting and watching for the word that freedom was coming. That's why it is called Watch Night, not because they were watching for a New Year or even watching for Jesus, Our Lord but because they kept watch for the word of freedom – an Emancipation Proclamation.

The desire to celebrate anniversaries is built into the fabric of the human spirit. The celebration of a jubilee stands out as a particular kind of celebration; marks a significant length of time during which communities have experienced some kind of faithfulness. The word "jubilee" comes from the Hebrew word "yobel," which means "horn." In Leviticus 25: 8-12, we read: "It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family....It shall be holy to you."

At our very essence, by our attendance today, we have shown that freedom, the coming of freedom was holy for us. We know from our history that congregationalism viewed freedom as holy. We know that part of the mission, a key part of their mission was the abolition of slavery in this county. We know the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people, founded so many years later, was also a movement; a movement to end the epidemic of lynchings of African American men, women and children at the turn of the century; a movement to end Jim Crow.

Today, America faces a New Jim Crow: an epidemic of mass incarceration, the rise of the prison industrial complex and an egregious situation that means that one in five men of color and one in three black men are incarcerated in America's prisons. Just as we came together so many years ago to abolish slavery, just as we came together to dismantle Jim Crow, we must come together to end the New Jim Crow to ensure that the freedom our ancestors fought so fervently for is reaffirmed. The New Jim Crow, is our common challenge. By our presence, we say that together we will fight again for all to be free.

And so we celebrate.

We celebrate our ancestors, brave and courageous who spoke out, who risked their lives and livelihoods, who died so that we might be here today.

We celebrate.

We celebrate the freedom fighters, Mary White Ovington, W.E.B. DuBois, Oswald Villiard, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Jonathan Edwards, we celebrate.

We celebrate because we believe in freedom and we who believe in freedom cannot rest.

We cannot rest.

We cannot rest.

We shall not rest ... until it comes.

Jubilee.