

SATURDAY
FEB 18
REBROADCAST

VIRTUAL WORSHIP EXPERIENCE
Alfred Street Baptist Church
SENIOR YOUTH/HIGHER GROUND MINISTRY
ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH PRESENTATION



THE BLACK ZONE

JOIN OUR CHILDREN & YOUTH
MINISTRY AS WE CELEBRATE
BLACK CULTURE & THE HISTORY
OF OUR ANCESTORS

REBROADCAST
SATURDAY 6PM & SUNDAY AT 8AM

52%

EMAIL: ChildrenandYouth@alfredstreet.org
if you have any questions

#ASBChildrenYouthCollege | #WeAreAlfredStreet





Date: February 18 and 19, 2023
Preacher: Higher Ground Youth Ministry
Sermon Title: Welcome to the Black Zone
Scripture: Various Scriptures

*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid,
but gives us power, love, and self-discipline. - II Timothy 1:7 (NIV)*

SERMON SUMMARY

Can you imagine a place where the story of Black people is centered, even privileged? Can you imagine an environment where Black people are not asked to play small? Higher Ground can, and they do in this week's sermonic presentation. Introducing us to Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks, choreographer and dancer Alvin Ailey, social justice warrior A. Philip Randolph, and authors Octavia Butler and Zora Neale Hurston, Higher Ground imagines a reality where men and women of African descent rise and take their rightful place as those imbued with dignity, excellence, wisdom, beauty, and power. Travel with Higher Ground to the "Black Zone" and do more than imagine another way for Black people to thrive in the United States, alongside Alfred Street Baptist Church's brilliant youth, to help create this reality. Welcome to the Black Zone!

KEY POINTS

1. The youth of Alfred Street are powerful in their presentation of God's embodied word and show us the legacy of African Americans.
2. They dream of a dimension where the gifts and contributions of people of African descent are acknowledged and celebrated *beyond* the 28 days of February.
3. Adversity can shape and sharpen us, causing us to create our best work and best selves.
4. Faith must overcome fear.
5. Even when the odds are against us, we can stand grounded in an unshakeable faith.
6. When others tell us we cannot, no matter who they are, we must persevere grounded in God's love, and push on to the end God intends.
7. There is joy in, through, and behind the story of people of African descent. Joy is a revolutionary force.
8. The love and joy of God hold us and deliver us through many trials and troubles.

Village Members and Facilitators,
The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions.
We ask facilitators to choose the best questions for your Village from each section.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS

1. Kayla Anderson spoke about one of her favorite Black history figures, Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks. Brooks achieved many first in her life. What are some “firsts” in your life for which you praise God? Your firsts don’t have to be like anyone else’s; they just have to be a blessing to you.
2. In her prayer, Kayla noted that “miracles are possible. They can happen.” Have you ever experienced a miracle? How did it affect you? What did it teach you?
3. It can be nostalgic watching Higher Ground lead worship at church. What fond memories do you have of growing up (in the church)?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. I Timothy 4:2 says, “*Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.*” What did you learn as you were led in worship by Higher Ground? Were you able to look up to them as worship leaders, or did you see them as ‘the kids’? How does I Timothy shift the way you worship **under** the leadership of Higher Ground?
2. As we learn about Alvin Ailey, we hear from II Timothy 1:9, “*He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.*” What do you believe is God’s purpose for saving and calling you?

3. II Timothy 1:7 (NIV) reminds us, “*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.*” What does this scripture mean to you? How can you live out this scripture in your daily life?

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. In the section on Zora Neal Hurston, we learn that there is joy in the history of Black people. However, our contemporary culture obscures joy with violence, ‘Black-on-Black crime, rising rates of drug abuse, and more. What role can the joy in and behind our story play in addressing the concerns in our current community? Can joy be a healing force? If so, how?
2. As we learned about A. Philip Randolph, we hear the words of Paul from I Corinthians 15:58, “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, **knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.***” Have you ever felt like your work for the Kingdom was in vain or experienced your work seemingly accomplishing nothing? In those moments, how do you hear this text, that work done for the Lord, is never in vain?
3. The historic 1963 March on Washington is a hallmark moment in the nation’s history. Our sermon suggests a connection between the courage and faith of A. Philip Randolph, in the face of obstacles and the faith, identified in Matthew 21:21; “*So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea, it will be done.’*” How do you build your faith muscle? What obstacles have helped increase your reservoir of faith?
4. Our sermon’s conclusion reminds us that God’s abiding love has delivered our people through many generations. When has God’s love reached into a particularly difficult situation in your life and delivered you? If you had the opportunity to do so, what would you share about the power of God’s love to deliver?

5. In the depiction of Octavia Butler, we hear that: “I allowed God to use me and used *his* gift of words to bust down doors and make our story.” Can you share a situation where you allowed God to use you or witnessed God using somebody to bust down doors? How did the experience change your idea of faith?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS?

1. In the first few words of this worship service, those gathered for worship are called by a particular noun: family. Families are complicated, messy, challenging, and on a good day, loving. How is the church like a family? If you were going to suggest counseling to your church family, what are your thoughts on areas of growth?
2. Fear gets a bad name. Humans are hardwired for fear, which sets up boundaries for us and can keep us safe. While our sermon reminds us to place/prioritize faith over fear, has fear ever served you well? Are there any positive aspects to fear?
3. As noted above, the sermon presents a dimension where the gifts and contributions of people of African descent are acknowledged and celebrated beyond the 28 days of February. However, a movement within our society is attempting to erase Black history through bans on educational curricula that teach the full history of African Americans in America. What is your role, as well as the church as an institution, in combating these bans? How can we continue to honor those who had come before us and paved the way for us despite such attacks on Black history?

ACTIVITY

The juxtaposition of the images in the sermonic musical selection *I've Been Praying* and the hopeful notes struck by each of those we met in the sermon is challenging to align. Still, we are each called to work for equity and justice in our nation. Write down one way you will take care of your own soul, so you will have the strength to strive for diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging in our nation. Please share your thoughts with your fellow Villagers.

SPIRIT WORK

This week, we included the sermonic musical selection as part of our work. As you listen to, *I've Been Praying*, by our featured singers and view the images that span the centuries, for what does your soul cry out? For what will you ask God's mercy? From what does our nation need to repent? Make a list of up to seven things for which we should pray for repentance. Post it and pray for these things during the season of Lent (which begins on Ash Wednesday, February 22nd).

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Within the structure of Village, there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions specifically for the individual groups. However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.

For Married Couples

1. One of the signature scriptures in this sermon is II Timothy 1:7 "*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and self discipline.*" How do power, love, and self discipline show up in your marriage? Is that working for you? What would you shift, if anything?
2. In this sermonic presentation, Alvin Ailey prays, "[God,] you have gifted me with so much, allow me not to shrink from this path, but rather rise in your image." In your marriage, what situations caused you to pray that God would keep you from shrinking and help you to rise? What helped you to stand? What would you share with others about facing moments like these?

For Young Adults

1. Our ancestor Alvin Ailey prays, "[God,] you have gifted me with so much, allow me not to shrink from this path, but rather rise in your image. Have you ever found yourself shrinking from using your gifts for God? How did this experience shift your spiritual walk? What did this experience teach you?

2. Zora Neale Hurston asked, “How can anyone deny themselves the pleasure of my company?” When you heard her say that, what did you think? Was that arrogance? Was it confidence? What does it mean to be sure about your place and worth?
3. It has been a theme in our country to dilute the telling of Black stories and experiences. How do you combat this reality? If you were to tell Black stories, how would you tell the story?

For Parents

1. Why is it essential for your child to know the history of people of African descent? What difference do you believe it will make in their lives?
2. Has your child ever told you about something they wanted to do, and like Octavia’s aunt, you **wanted** to tell them, “Child, you can’t do that.” What did you do? How did you navigate that landscape? What did you learn?

For Seniors

1. Matthew 21:21 says we have the power to move “mountains”, if only we have faith. What mountains do you want to be moved? What role does your faith play in this prayer?
2. As seasoned saints, we experienced some of the most difficult times in our nation’s history regarding racism. How can we share with our youth the importance of understanding their history to strengthen them for their future?

For Women

1. Octavia Butler heard from those who loved her what she ***could not be***. Has anyone told you, in error, what you could not be? Were you able to counter this misinformation? As you look back, did this experience help or hinder your growth?
2. We live in a time where it continues to be difficult to be a woman, but to be a woman of color is even more so. How do we, as women, overcome the stereotype of being marginalized in society as well as in our churches?
3. Higher Ground allows us to imagine a new world. What would it consist of if you were to dream of a new world?

For Men

1. Alvin Ailey tells us the story of growing up under racial disparities and a charged political climate. However, he uses these circumstances to inspire him to create great art. Have you ever faced adversities that brought great works out of you? What great works did your adversity uncover?
2. A. Philip Randolph admitted his fear of speaking up about labor rights for his people, but despite his fear, he spoke of how big his God was in the face of the opposition. How has your faith in God played a part in your moving forward despite known opposition?

For Returning Citizens

1. The Black Zone might be understood as a space where Black people can stand up and be their full selves. If we were to build a safe space in our community, what elements must be present? How might you help bring those elements to your community?

2. The sermon provides that Paul reminds us to be bold, walk proudly in God's love and spirit and use that power to fulfill God's plans for our lives. How do you walk boldly in your life to fulfill God's plans for you?

For Differently-Abled Persons/People

1. Octavia Butler describes herself as a painfully shy child. She asked her Mom for a typewriter to express herself safely. How do you safely express yourself? How did you learn to do this? How has it helped you be more of the soul God created you to be?
2. The sermon tells us that when we use the key of faith to unlock a door God has for us, we move beyond fear to a place where we are grounded in an unshakable faith. Please share with your fellow Villagers a time when you used the key of faith. How did it impact your relationship with God?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Gwendolyn Brooks
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/05/29/530081834/remembering-the-great-poet-gwendolyn-brooks-at-100>
2. Alvin Ailey's most recognized piece is Revelation. You can view it here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDXerubF4I4>
3. A Philip Randolph
<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/a-philip-randolph>
4. Octavia Butler
<https://www.octaviabutler.com>
5. Zora Neale Hurston
<https://www.zoranealehurston.com>