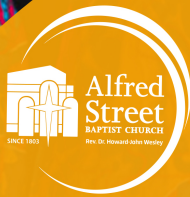


NOV. 27/28



A SERMON BY REV. DR. JUDY FENTRESS-WILLIAMS
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Sunday, November 27, 2021

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Judy Fentress-Williams

Sermon: Now See Here



**CURRICULUM
GUIDE**



Sermon Summary

When we enter the text, the Israelites have just fled Egypt. Following Moses into the wilderness, they make their way to the Red Sea and camp by the town of Pi-hahiroth. But soon after they arrive, word reaches them that Pharaoh and his army are in pursuit. The Israelites cry out to God in fear. Moses understands the Israelites' panic. The memory of four hundred years as Egyptian slaves blinds them to the possibility of a different future. Moses knows it is hard for the Israelites to believe freedom is close at hand. The news that Pharaoh is approaching resurrects the pain of the Hebrew's past. They do not trust Moses to lead them out. They do not trust because "traumatized people have trust issues". And the Israelites are traumatized.

Like the Israelites, we struggle as modern-day pharaohs approach and challenges meet us at every single turn. We cry out to God in fear and ask, "God, why did you bring us here?" We are traumatized by the killing of black men, the freeing of white men and the racism that pervades our nation.

In response to our fear and the fear of the ancient Israelites, Moses speaks saying, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and see the deliverance of the Lord." Moses calls all of us to "now see here", to lift our gaze above the trauma and the approaching pharaohs and train our eyes on the God of our salvation. Moses and Dr. Judy remind us that our God will fight our battles, if we just keep still.

Key Points

1. Panic, pressure and pain of past experiences can distract us from what God is able to do for us today.
2. In our lives, we experience the feeling of the world crashing in around us. We feel as if the pharaohs of the world, and all their chariots, are in hot pursuit.
3. Moments like these cause us to lose hope and to ask God, “why did you bring us here?”
4. In these moments, while it is reasonable to be afraid, it is not the course of action God desires for us.
5. Instead, we are reminded to not privilege the perpetrator of our pain or allow oppression of any kind to overtake us. Dr. Judy urges us to turn our eyes toward Jesus and not be afraid.
6. God calls us to look beyond the immediacy of our circumstances and trust that the Lord, our God has “what we need, more than we need and better than we need”, waiting for us.
7. Moses asks the Israelites to “see” three times in the text. Now, you and I are called to “see”, by faith, the good God has in store for us.

Getting To Know You Questions:

1. Dr. Judy says her friend Faye uses the phrase, “Now see here” to draw her attention to a particular point. Do you have a “go to phrase” that you use to get someone’s attention?
2. The lyrics of the hymn, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus, are noted below. Please pick a phrase from this hymn that touches your heart and share why.
Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Into The Bible Questions:

1. Just prior to being camped by the sea the Israelites witnessed sever miracles performed by Aaron and Moses in Pharaoh's presence (please see, Exodus, chapters 7 - 11). But, as Pharaoh's chariots approached their encampment, they lost all nerve and their faith. Why do you think their faith was so fleeting?
2. In Exodus 14:10, it says the Israelites cried out to the Lord. The Hebrew word for cry out means to call for help. Have you ever called out to the Lord for help? If so, what was that experience like? What did the experience produce in you?
3. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen (Hebrews 11:1). What did the Israelites see as they were camped by the sea? For what did they hope? What is the effect of the discrepancy between these two positions?





Life Application Questions:

1. Have you ever worn corrective lenses? If you have, what changed when you a used your corrective lenses? How did your vision change? How might faith in God be like corrective lenses?
2. When the people of Israel seemed ready to choose enslavement in Egypt over the perils of trying to escape, Dr. Judy says, "...they were not ready for freedom." If a person or a people have been oppressed and robbed of their agency and liberty, what circumstances must be present to prepare them for freedom?
3. Dr. Judy reminds us the Bible often records the instruction to "fear not". She notes that this must mean there are many things to fear. She continues, "...it is reasonable to fear, but it is not right to fear." What do you think she means by this? Do you believe fear is good or bad or both?
4. Moses is trying to get the people to look with eyes of faith beyond their current circumstances to the promises of God for their deliverance. When you are in a difficult situation, are there things you tell yourself that help you raise up and look beyond the moment to a future that is more hopeful? If so, what are those things you speak to your own soul?



"Can I Push It?"

1. Like the Israelites, have you ever been in a position where you know your future position will be better (i.e., freedom from bondage), but the way there is dangerous and difficult?
 - a. Did you choose the safety of known bondage, or did you forge ahead through dangers seen and unseen? What did you learn?
 - b. If you chose safety, looking back, would you do anything differently?
2. Dr. Judy tells us that traumatized people have trust issues. Trauma strips us of the ability to trust systems, people and sometimes ourselves. The Church has been a source of trauma to many including but not limited to: the LGBTQIA community, transgender people, returning citizens (the formerly incarcerated) and women. How can the capital "C" church help heal this trauma? How can Alfred Street do the same?

Activity:

1. Dr. Judy ends the sermon with a beautiful prayer. She says, "God, we stand here today, encamped against the sea, looking at the enemy advancing. And, in this moment, God, we want to look to you..."
 - a. Please finish this prayer with lines that are important to you.
 - b. To see the end of Dr. Judy's prayer, please see Additional References.



Spirit Work:

1. During your prayer time each day, listen to the hymn, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ka7bVQmbnk>.
2. As you listen, complete this sentence: "Jesus, today, as I turn my eyes upon you, help me. . . ."

Additional Questions for Married Couples:

1. Dr. Judy tells the story of giving her students a head start on answering correctly, the first question on their final exam. However, she notes, sometimes when a person is under stress, it is hard to listen.
 - a. Are there times when it is hard for you to listen to your partner? What are those times?
 - b. What would happen if you could talk with your partner about these "moments" and find a more effective way to listen and hear?
2. Dr. Judy uses the phrase "trigger" to identify experiences that bring back pain from the past.
 - a. Are there triggers in your relationship that show up and create mental health challenges/concerns for you and your partner?
 - b. If so, how do you address them? Have you found particularly helpful methods of responding to triggers?
 - c. In terms of your partner's love languages, how do you deposit into your partner's account after a triggering incident?

Additional Questions for Young Adults:

1. Action and productivity are often the hallmarks of worldly success. What happens in your body when you hear Moses' admonition to "keep still"?
 - a. Is it easy or difficult for you to keep still?
 - b. If you have chosen to keep still, what methods do you use to quiet your mind and spirit?
2. Dr. Judy uses the phrase "trigger" to identify experiences that bring back pain from the past. Are there triggers in your life that show up and create mental health challenges/concerns for you?
 - a. If so, how do you address them?
 - b. Have you found particularly helpful methods of responding to triggers?
3. The sermon reminds us that trauma can bring up real and reasonable questions about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In what ways does Scripture provide us with similar or different definitions of these than the Constitution? What freedoms does God give us that the world can't take away?

Additional Questions for Parents:

1. Young children have limited perspective based on their short time on earth. Asking them to "see" the future is a challenge. Yet, there are times when they must wait for the things of God to unfold. How do you invite your children to "be still" and wait for the salvation/the blessings of the Lord?
2. If you were to create a prayer for your teenager to find patience to wait on God, what are some of the phrases you would include in that prayer?

Additional Questions for Women:

1. Dr. Judy uses the phrase “trigger” to identify experiences that bring back pain from the past. Are there triggers in your church life that show up and create challenges in walking out your faith as a woman of God?
 - a. Have you found particularly helpful methods of responding to church life triggers?
 - b. Are there spiritual practices you turn to for support?
2. The sermon reminds us that trauma can bring up real and reasonable questions about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In what ways does Scripture provide us with similar or different definitions of these than the Constitution? What freedoms does God give us that the world can’t take away?
3. We learn in this sermon when someone hurts us, we are likely to keep our eyes on them. But we are encouraged to lift our eyes beyond the perpetrator of our pain and to broaden our scope, looking to the Lord for our next steps.
 - a. How does one accomplish this lifting of our eyes beyond the source of our pain?
 - b. If we are able to do so, what might occur?

Additional Questions for Men:

1. Dr. Judy notes that the Israelites have moved through their world with “caution and fear and in survival mode”. Men of color in our contemporary culture move through their days carrying the burden of implicit bias and racism.
 - a. If you are a man of color, has your race caused you to live in survival mode? If so, how?
 - b. How has your faith played a role in guiding the way you live your life more abundantly?
2. Action and productivity are often the hallmarks of worldly success. What happens in your body when you hear Moses’ admonition to “keep still”?
 - a. Is it easy or difficult for you to keep still?
 - b. If you have chosen to keep still, what methods do you use to quiet your mind and spirit?
3. Spiritual bondage occurs in many ways. Sometimes, we are held in bondage by old and outdated prescriptions of masculinity and the definitions of how men have to show up, e.g., leader, protector, breadwinner, provider, etc. Have you ever experienced being held in spiritual bondage to stereotypes of masculinity in the church or elsewhere?

Additional Questions for Returning Citizens

1. Like the Israelites, returning citizens have known the experience of having their freedom limited by powers beyond their control.
 - a. What did you learn during your time of being without your freedom that you hold in your heart as wisdom for your current days?
2. Action and productivity are often the hallmarks of worldly success. Returning citizens have had an experience of being made to keep still. What happens in your body when you hear Moses' admonition to "keep still"?
 - a. Is it easy or difficult for you to keep still?
 - b. If you have chosen to keep still, what methods do you use to quiet your mind and spirit?
3. When faced with a difficult decision, like the Israelites, sometimes returning citizens make decisions that lead to bondage, rather than freedom? Why do you think this might be so?

This Week's Additional Resources

1. AGAPE Ministry (Achieving Growth and Awareness through Psychological Empowerment): Alfred Street Baptist Church offers mental well-being services to members through a variety of ministries and programs. If you are in need of support, please contact agape@alfredstreet.org.
2. Jail and Prison Ministry:
 - a. Village is honored to support returning citizens in their lives beyond institutional walls. If you would like support from the Alfred Street Jail and Prison Ministry please contact, jailandprison@alfredstreet.org.
 - b. Baptist Scholar and Professor, Michelle Alexander has authored a powerful book that will provide a backdrop to the challenges faced by incarcerated men and women. The title of the book is The New Jim Crow. <https://newjimcrow.com>.
3. Five Love Languages: During August, 2021, the sermons focused on a resource by Dr. Gary Chapman, The Five Love Languages. If you wish to review the resource, please go to <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/learn>.
4. Trauma: Dr. Judy mention the power of trauma to erode trust and impact our lives. A brief synopsis of the impact of trauma on the brain can be found in the following article. <https://www.bostontrials.com/how-trauma-changes-the-brain>.

This Week's References

The entirety of Dr. Judy's prayer is as follows, "God, we stand here today, encamped against the sea, looking at the enemy advancing. And in this moment, God, we want to look to you. Open our eyes so that we can see. Show us what we will do next. We are going to put our trust in you. In Jesus name. We pray. Amen. "