

2018 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power (Ex 15:1-21)

PREACHING RESOURCE

This preaching resource was prepared by Fritz-Gerald Joseph. He was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and moved to Montreal, Canada, where he served as an associate Pastor at the Pentecostal Church Missionary of Prayer (Disciples of Christ) for 9 years. Since October 2017, he and his wife Emmanuela have been serving as Mission Co-Workers in Morocco for Global Ministries with the Evangelical Church of Morocco. They are working alongside the Catholic Church to help and serve migrants and refugees all around the country.

Historic Correlation

Many of the challenges we face today are heritages of our history. Many aspects of our lives are a direct reflection of our past. It is quite difficult for people who had never been enslaved to fully understand the mentality, the life and the outcome of those who had been enslaved for centuries. When it comes to slavery and redemption, the Caribbean region has a similar story with the children of Israel. One was oppressed and kept in chains for 5 centuries, the other for 4 centuries. In both stories, we have a name attached to the work of liberation. *Toussaint Louverture* is for Haiti and the Caribbean what *Moses* was for the Hebrews – the liberator. He was the leader that fought to free his people. Once the people of Haiti have been liberated, they fought and helped other nations to get their freedom as well. However, Toussaint Louverture was not able to see the freedom he was fighting for, because he was captured before the final war that was going to lead to the Independence of Haiti. While he was being deported from Haiti to France, he declared: “*By overthrowing me, you have killed only the trunk of the tree of liberty of the black people; but it will grow back by the roots, for they are deep and numerous.*”

Wherever there is oppression and enslavement, there is a seed of freedom in the heart of the oppressed. It is a matter of time for the roots to grow. Sooner or later they will sing the song of freedom and the future generations will be able to rest upon the tree of liberty.

A Song of Freedom

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” This is the first article of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human beings are not only born free and equal in dignity and right, but also were created free. Freedom is not a human privilege but a divine gift to the masterpiece of creation, us! Free will is one of the manifestations of God’s given freedom to humans. We are free to think, free to move, and free to speak. However, while living in this freedom, it is our duty to protect and respect our neighbors’ freedom.

History has taught us that there are numerous reasons that motivate one person to deprive another of his or her freedom. No matter what the motivations are, the same hand that has formed the human body in the book of Genesis is the same hand that will liberate its creation from anything that is oppressing it. From slavery of sin to anything that diminishes human dignity like poverty, sickness, moral, mental and physical abuse, God has been working through the ages to redeem his creation. Pharaoh and his army represented all the motivations, actions and systems that want to subdue human beings to something less than what they were created to be.

As we stand against these things, God is standing right beside us. His right hand is ready to manifest its might and power. The hand that manifests grace towards the oppressed, that protects the vulnerable; but also the hand that applies justice to the oppressor and destroys the destroyer. Moses and the Israelites have seen this hand in action. The people of the Caribbean have seen it too. Today we can see it working among us through those who are working for justice, peace and unity in our communities, in our countries and in the world. Let us rejoice and celebrate every battle won in these areas, as the Israelites sang to God and celebrated the liberty and the victory He has given them!

Leadership Crisis

Slavery has done several damages to people, and nations. One of the biggest damages is the lack of leadership. When somebody has never been allowed to think or decide for oneself, it is nearly impossible for this person to think or decide for others. Great leaders like Moses or Toussaint are gifts from God. Leaders who are willing to dedicate their lives to the liberation's cause of the oppressed. Men and women who stand and speak for those who cannot.

Moses showed us a very good example of a man who understands the suffering of his people and the perplexity of the various situations they were facing. He was connected to them, he knew their realities but he relied on God who empowered him to free them. Great leaders serve and uplift others, but true freedom comes from God.

Our communities today are seeking and looking for this type of leaders to stand up: men and women who stand for unity in our communities, who are willing to stand up and speak up for the poor, for the abused, for the elders, for the youth, for the women, for the children, for the marginalized, etc.

New Challenges

Numerous are the challenges that we have overcome as human beings and as children of God. A lot of work has been done to restore and preserve human dignity, to eradicate poverty, to abolish human slavery and to find unity in the body of Christ. Many of our present challenges are heritages of our history. As our societies are evolving, new challenges are emerging. We are all affected by climate changes, massive migration, and economic crisis, to say the least. We cannot change the past, but we know for sure that our actions today will affect future generations.

Let us not be weary in doing good, let us not be discouraged nor lose hope! We can face our challenges knowing that we are not alone, for the Lord has been a refuge from generation to generation and his right hand is still glorious in power!

Amen!