

Sermon Date: February 14, 2021
Sermon Series: "Rooted, Keeping the Faith in a World in Flux"
Sermon Title: Roots that Bear Fruit
Biblical Passage: Isaiah 11:1-10, 53:1-5
Black History Month, Black Heritage Sunday

Out of the stump of David's family^[a] will grow a shoot yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. ² And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ He will delight in obeying the LORD. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay. ⁴ He will give justice to the poor and make fair decisions for the exploited. The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked. ⁵ He will wear righteousness like a belt and truth like an undergarment. ⁶ In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. ⁷ The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. ⁸ The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm. ⁹ Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD. ¹⁰ In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

Who has believed our message?

To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?

² My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground.

There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

³ He was despised and rejected—

a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

⁴ Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;

it was our sorrows^[a] that weighed him down.

And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!

⁵ But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins.

Pastor Warnock chose to shine the sermonic spotlight on the following verses:
Chapter 11:1-2 and Chapter 53:2

Summary:

The sermon highlights the spiritual and historical intersections with the descendants of Jesse and the experiences of African Americans. A shoot growing from a stump has significance in our text and in African American history because in each instance, it points to the regenerative power of God to make something out of nothing. Like Israel our fore-mothers and fathers suffered the indignities of slavery yet God delivered in both cases proving he can bring new growth from the ravages caused by being uprooted. The genealogical “roots” of Jesus can be traced back forty-two generations to Jesse the father of King David from whom the prophet Isaiah predicted would rise the Messiah.

Sermon Points:

1. God brings new life from a stump
2. We must stay rooted in a firm foundation
3. We must know something about our roots to remain rooted

God brings new life from a stump

The sermon’s text spotlights the parallels between Jesse’s people and African Americans by highlighting how “God continues to write our stories.” Like Jesse’s story, Black history is a holy history. It’s a history showing new life springing forth from when we have been cut down and cut off. We are reminded of the surprising harvest of human possibility in arid places. Still out of drought and dry places, comes divine power. We are reminded in Isaiah that there is equity for the meek. Howard Thurman confirms that Black folks are co-creators with God in their own salvation through the Black church.

We must stay rooted in a firm foundation

Black History month is a defined time to reflect on the African American story. This story stems from an enslaved people forced into exile and cut off from their/our history. While we have been physically moved from our African homeland, we live our lives without the complete story of our cultural home, a stump where there used to be a tree. Yet, the African American story tells us that “a root shall come to pass”. Alex Haley’s story “Roots” told us that we need to know something about ourselves. Our human dignity, even during enslavement our people continued to look up and to “behold the only thing greater than yourself.” God is still writing our story.

We must know something about our roots to remain rooted

Understanding African American history should strengthen our roots in God. While the history of Tuskegee is undeniable, God continues to write Black history in dry ground. Such is the story of the lead scientist in development of the corona virus vaccine Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett. We can visualize the root out of dry ground and trust science. We can see God bringing forth new growth in the heroic works of Capital Police Officer Eugene Goodman, who directed danger toward himself to protect the lives of congressional members during the insurrection. Likewise, Jesus redirected the punishment for sin away from us so we could be saved.

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain the importance of Black history Month to you?
2. Talk about the parallels you see in the Bible and African American history.
3. Describe *stump-like* circumstances and new growth you have experienced.
4. Do you trust the science enough for your COVID-19 vaccination? Why or why not!
5. What are the rituals and practices that keep you rooted?
6. Do you consider self-sacrifice your duty as a believer in Christ? Why or why not?