

Sermon Title: WHEN IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS:
THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY
Preacher: Rev. Dr. John H. Vaughn, Executive Pastor
Bible Passages Exodus 1:1-10
Date: August 20, 2023

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 1:1-10 (NRSV)

1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, ³ Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, ⁴ Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ⁵ The total number of people born to Jacob was seventy. (Joseph was already in Egypt.) ⁶ Then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and that whole generation. ⁷ But the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. ⁸ Now a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. ⁹ He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

Isaiah 43:19 *(NRSV)

*I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.*

SERMON NOTES:

Pastor Vaughn showed us an excerpt of a Ted Talk by a Nigerian woman. When she came to the United States as a college student, she discovered the single story about Africa. That story authorized white Americans to marginalize and dismiss the humanity of black Africans. In the same way, Pharaoh's single story about the Israelites authorized Egyptians to marginalize and dismiss the humanity of the Israelites. Likewise, the single (predominant/ leading/ official) story about "other" people in America marginalizes and dismisses the humanity of black, brown, red, yellow and LGBTQ+ people. Single stories can dispossess and malign and break human dignity; They can also repair that broken dignity.

The Bible story of the Israelites, Joseph and Pharaoh exemplifies how Egypt's single story, like America's single story, wrote the contributions of Joseph and the Israelites out of Egyptian history. Egypt's and America's single stories conclude that "others" are a threat. Enslavement then becomes Egypt's and America's solution to their threat problem.

How do we face the danger of the single-story problem in our quest for social justice? How do we overcome marginalization and attempts to erase human beings? How do we claim our ability to tell our own story? Answers:

One, listen and connect with those who marginalize us.

Two, See the humanity in each other.

Three, Do what God does – be present and listen.

Sermon Points:

The challenges for Ebenezer and our vision to become the Beloved Community:

1. Include those who have not been included in our history.
2. Recognize white communities that have historically been aligned with the struggles of Black people.
3. We have to be authentic. (Live intentionally, and tell the truth as we share our hopes, dreams, hurts, intentions and realities. Our rate of growth will be measured by the speed of our trust.)
4. We don't have to do this alone! (God is doing a new thing! God is transforming hearts, minds, lives, communities and the world. Where shall we go from God's Spirit? Nothing shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus!)

Discussion Questions

1. What single story or stories have hurt you? Helped you?
2. In what way has God been present or absent in your life story?
3. Have you ever believed "stories" about "others"?
4. In what way(s) does the story of Jesus contradict or confirm our beliefs about one another?
5. How has God changed the world?