



Preaching, Teaching and Reaching for
Transformation and Liberation

“CONSCIOUS AND INTENTIONAL MINISTRY: DOING WHO I AM WITH UNDERSTANDING”

Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to
know what Israel ought to do... 1 Chronicles 12:32

THE PASTOR’S PEN March 5, 2023

BLACK HISTORY / BLACK CHURCH THOUGHTS

Over the next few weeks, I will share some of my thoughts from previous writings regarding the Black Church. As I think out loud, I pray that you join me on the journey.

Stage 4: The Black religious experience as teenager in the post Civil Rights era.

Since the Black church initially bore the civil rights movement, there is, apparently, an innate theology already inherent in the foundation of the Black church that equates Christianity to freedom. I believe that it can be found in Luke 4:16-21. In this passage, God is present, in Jesus, to give good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to recover sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed. This ministry equalizes everyone. When the poor receives the good news, and the broken hearted are healed, and the captives are released, and the blind see, and the oppressed receive relief, the walls once used to divide us now become bridges that connect us. When we develop a relationship with the incarnated Jesus, we, like the slaves, have access to his compassionate humanity and his divine power. That being true, why is there so much bondage in our communities? Part of that answer is in the Black preacher. The Black church has something that no other faith group or institution has – the Black preacher. The Black preacher has been one of the greatest assets to many communities across this country. Were it not for the Black preacher, many residents in those communities would be living in greater despair. No other voice has resounded the call for freedom than the elegant, melodically rich, reverberating voice of the Black preacher. In stark contrast to what the Black preacher has done to further the cause of freedom, the Black preacher has also been a major liability. Many individuals that I have spoken with have shared that they no longer have faith in the church due to the actions of some Black preachers.

The time is ripe for the Black preacher to resume the role of leader and again move the Black church to fulfill its prophetic role in society. The Black church, through the leadership of the Black preacher, like a teenager has abandoned its foundational principles and taken on destructive practices. Wilmore quotes Philip A. Bruce regarding the role of the Black preacher in the eighteenth century:

The preachers of the negroes are the most active politicians, as a rule, but even when they are not they have much political influence, for they constitute individually, the natural leader of their race, being elevated to their clerical position not because they are men of greater holiness of life or eloquence of tongue than the rest of their fellows, but because they have more energy and decision of character.¹

As the Black church began to grow and find its place and purpose in society, so did the Black preacher. Both began to emerge as leaders in the community. Wilmore speaks of Richard Allen:

His vision was of a well-ordered, but flexible, spirit-filled, community-oriented church which could immediately move into the arena of the struggle for Black freedom and equality. His real affection was for Blade Willgoose’s class, which met on Monday nights and was made up of poor and ignorant people who needed his help as a community leader as well as a preacher.²

Indeed the Black preacher assumed tremendous responsibility and it yielded tremendous respect. Does the Black church today see the role of the church and preacher in this same light? The Black church of the eighteenth century saw the need

¹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1983) p. 105.

² Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1983) p. 111.

to provide ministry to the total person. The church saw its role as more than dispensing the gospel, but providing that leadership necessary to insure that the message of the gospel was made real to everyone who heard it, from the greatest to the least. Everyone has to see the gospel as being relevant in his or her own lives. If not, the church becomes an unnecessary essential. Benjamin Mays wrote in 1933:

Therefore the Negro ministry of tomorrow, in addition to being convinced that it is “called” of God, will be confronted with the task of making an honest, intellectual, and moral appeal to a somewhat sophisticated and critical generation. The Negro minister will be challenged to assume more and more of the role of a true prophet – the one who interprets the will of God to men – in personal, social, economic and religious life. As some one has aptly put it: “He must not command but he must convince.”³

³ Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, *The Negro's Church* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933) p. 51.

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\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 Subject books for elementary (math, literature, history, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 iPad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 basketballs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 art sets for aspiring artists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External security lighting to keep the street well-lit and safe
\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 Summer Bridge books to help students retain learning during breaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 "learn how to code" kits for elementary students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 tennis rackets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 beginner saxophones or 8 beginner violins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camera security system to keep everyone safe
\$2,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 students can be challenged to excel using interactive problem-solving programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 computer for graphic design and website creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 sets of golf clubs for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Play Scripts with performance/licensing fee and cast instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wireless PA system to easily communicate at the school
\$5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 smartboard to help teachers engage students in learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 STEM lab cart of materials for a classroom with multiple activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-day Speed and Agility workshop for 15 young aspiring track stars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 pairs of tap shoes for aspiring dancers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battery operated floor scrubber to keep the building looking its best
\$10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 trip for 15 students to visit 1 HBCU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 Robotic kits to reinforce studies in STEAM subjects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open gym for 20 young people 1 X a week throughout the winter in a safe place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200 tickets to see Alvin Ailey Dance Company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LED light fixtures throughout the school to promote learning and natural light

WORK FOR THE WEEK

MARCH MEMORY VERSE

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things are just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Philippians 4:8

MARCH MEDITATION QUOTE

"I must confront my own complicity with a European way of thinking"

Dr. Miguel De La Torres