

# Africo-American Presbyterian

AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.—John viii:32

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## SERMON AT FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ST. JAMES CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY

Preached by Dr. Maitland Bartlett, Stated Clerk, Presbytery of New York, Sunday, April 28.

Text: "Wherefore criest thou to me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." Exodus 14:15.

I am very happy to be here today to bring you the greetings of the Presbytery of New York upon your fortieth birthday. I am anxious that this should be more than a greeting; for while I have not been authorized to do so, I would bring you a message from us all.

First, however, let me recall to you something of the history of this your own church. I am wondering if there are any here today whose memories go back to its beginnings. If so, you must be looked upon as fathers and mothers in Israel, and you will remember the work of Dr. Pierce Butler Thompkins, through whose efforts it was effected. Yet even then you had a forerunner in the Shiloh church, which, after a somewhat difficult time, had been dissolved by Presbytery in 1891. There were a few members of that church who could not find church homes elsewhere. They were Presbyterians by inheritance and Presbyterians they wished to remain. After their meeting place on 26th Street was closed they met in homes for prayer meetings until at last they were gathered together by Mr. Thompkins, who was a licentiate of this Presbytery and who constituted himself a missionary to this group.

There was one interesting item that I chanced upon in delving into your history. When the Shiloh church was sold a new congregation was being formed on the upper west side known as the Lenox Presbyterian church. It is possible, although the records do not clearly show this, that some of the proceeds of the sale of Shiloh church, which went to the church Extension Committee, were used to help in the new enterprise. The Lenox church did not endure for many years and it was finally merged with the congregation of the St. Nicholas Presbyterian church, whose building you now own. This is a bit of reconstructed history which I have not been able to verify.

The little group which was the remnant left of the old Shiloh church became a united band and they held meetings in the parlor of Mrs. Wm. Lively and formed themselves into a society that held religious services every Sunday and finally rented a place known as Odd Fellows' Hall, 108 W. 32nd Street, where they held their stated services and carried on their activities. Rev. H. G. Miller preached to them occasionally. After a time Rev. P. Butler Thompkins, a graduate of Lincoln University, and a student in Union Theological Seminary, was invited to their hall to preach for them. They were so pleased with his enthusiasm and his devoted Christian spirit that they asked him to preach regularly for them. It was not long before he organized the little group into a church of eleven members. Let us call the roll. They were the founders of this church: Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Wells, Dr. and Mrs. Lively, Mrs. Hattie Morris, Mr. and Mrs. Hallet Green, Mrs. P. D. Blackwell, Mrs. Bundy, Mrs. Anna Wells, and Mr. Thomas Thompson. Mr. Thompkins became their pastor but would not accept a salary. Mrs. Lively gave this newly formed organization the name, "The New Presbyterian Church."

This was a venture of faith

on the part of the pastor. With a little group, with no assured salary, he labored unceasingly. The little group increased from 11 to 44 and was organized as a church of Presbytery on April 26th, 1895. The Committee of organization sent from Presbytery were Drs. Buchanan and Rossiter and Mr. John McWilliams. In July of that year, upon the recommendation of Presbytery, the name was changed to "The St. James Presbyterian Church." In 1898 the group



ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY  
Dr. Wm. Lloyd Imes, Pastor.

moved into a larger hall on West 32nd Street, and set themselves tirelessly to the work of raising a building fund for the purpose of erecting or purchasing a church edifice. Two good friends of the church in those days were Mr. Constant A. Andrews, President of the United States Savings Bank, and Rev. George Alexander, of the University Place church. How many are there in this city who were befriended by the sainted Dr. Alexander? By the early summer \$12,000 had been raised and they pledged themselves to raise \$50,000. By the fall of 1901 their fund had grown to \$42,000.

Dr. Thompkins' arduous work had taxed his strength and in the autumn of 1901 his health began to fail. He lingered during the winter and in the spring he entered into rest. He left behind a church that had been firmly established. From the little group of eleven had grown under the guidance of God a church that in February, 1903, purchased the property of the West 51st Presbyterian church for \$40,000. Here for eleven years you carried on nobly under the pastorate of Dr. C. LeRoy Butler, who more firmly cemented together your organization. In 1911 Dr. Butler was succeeded by Dr. Lawton, who continued as pastor until 1915. But the parish was moving from this neighborhood and in 1914 the Church Extension Committee procured a property on 137th Street and upon it built a new church at a cost of \$56,509. Your old property was sold for \$40,238 and the balance of the cost was borne by the Church Extension Committee. Here you worshipped for thirteen years. For ten years your pastor was Dr. Frank M. Hyder, until in 1925 Dr. Imes, your present pastor, came to you and has been your able leader for these last ten years.

We rejoice with you in the church history that you have been able to write during these years. While it has been hard for you at times, as we look at you today we realize that it has been marked by ever-growing usefulness, and never during these forty years have you been as flourishing as you are today. I do not say that you are stronger. Strength resides not in numbers. It resides in this—that God is with you. "Apart from me ye can do nothing." There might have been as much strength in those eleven members in whose hearts St. James was born as in the host of those who make up your communion today. But God has been with you always. He has widened your bounds and enlarged your borders. You are singularly

blessed in your leadership. Your pastor has taken his place in the life and work of the Presbytery. He has brought you all with him and today we count St. James as one of the pillars of the faith in this vast city of New York.

While such an anniversary must be filled with rejoicing for us all, it will not do to think today only in retrospect. We must think of the future. There lie yet larger things before you. When the children of Israel stood on the shores of the Red Sea with the hosts of Pharaoh pressing hard upon them God's message was this: "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." They could do this because of what lay behind. God had been with them through the past days. He would not leave them now when the peril was upon them. I can say to you now, as you stand upon the threshold of another decade of service, that I hear God saying today, "Speak unto the people of St. James that they go forward." I have confidence that as you think of the past you will not hesitate. I have no fears for the days to come. There are some reasons for the assurance that I, perhaps, realize more than you do.

1. You come of a race that is characterized by a deep fervor of religious experience. It is a great blessing and a wonderful heritage. You may not always be true to it. Always it has marked the history of your people. How often I have coveted for the men and women of my own race something of this fervor of religious faith which comes to you by inheritance. We have it at times and in certain periods, but it does not cling to us as it clings to you. I think this is one of the great contributions which you bring to us in our common task. In

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## SWAPPING THE DEVIL FOR A WITCH

By Dr. Kelly Miller

In a recent release I recalled how the colored people, under the leadership of the N. A. A. C. P., united as they have never before or since, in effective protest against the confirmation of Judge John J. Parker, nominated by President Hoover as Justice of the Supreme Court. There are two things for which Mr. Hoover's administration was pronounced and preeminent—first, his proneness to foster wealth and power, and second, his coolness and indifference towards the political rights of the colored race. Judge Parker was supposed to reflect both of these attitudes in the superlative degree. His outspoken attitude against the constitutional rights of the Negro aroused the whole race in antagonism against his confirmation. On the other hand, his judicial decisions in favor of capital against labor, marked him as the avowed enemy of the young world. The organized labor forces of the nation, with such political influence as it could command, were soundly arrayed against his confirmation. For once the rights of the Negro and the demands of labor were united in a common cause. Judge Parker owes his defeat to the combination of these two influences. There was little understanding or sympathy between these two component forces which produced a common resultant. Each, while pursuing its own end, found itself reinforced and strengthened by the other.

President Hoover substituted the name of Justice Roberts for that of Judge Parker to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Bench. Perhaps it would not be fair to say that the President, of purpose and forethought, had in mind to rebuke both the Negro and the laboring man by this substitution, but it turns out that way. Justice Roberts was chosen as the mouthpiece for the Texas Primary decision which sanctions race distinction and not race discrimination in the franchise. The practical effect of this decision will be to eliminate the Negro from participation in the selection of persons to be voted for, under Federal sanction, the same as hitherto prevailed under sheer chicanery. It gives judicial sanction to a sinister procedure. Although this decision was reached by unanimous concurrence of the nine Justices, nevertheless, the fact that Judge Roberts was chosen as mouthpiece indicates that he must have played a leading role in advocating and bringing about this decision. The Negro is certainly no better off under Justice Roberts than he would have been under Justice Parker.

Now let us see how labor has been requited by this substitution. Justice Roberts, up to the Railroad decision, formed the balance of judgment between the four conservatives and avowed progressives on the Supreme Bench. He has thrown the weight of his judgment on the side of the progressives producing the famous 5 to 4 decisions which have upheld President Roosevelt's "New Deal." He was universally extolled by the labor and liberal forces. But in the "Pension Act" which is, perhaps, more criterional of the "New Deal" than any other issue that has been brought to the Supreme Court, Justice Roberts' judgment turned the scale from the side of labor to that of capital. The decision was still a five to four vote but its tenor is in reverse. The administration which had hitherto looked to the Supreme Court as salvator of the "New Deal" stands bewildered as to the attitude of Judge Roberts on other measures which may spell the

success or doom of its policies. The laboring world stands aghast and is threatening a constitutional amendment which would make legislation in its behalf proof against the Supreme Bench. On the other hand, capital is jubilant and has already mentioned Justice Roberts as a fitting candidate for the Presidential nomination on the Republican capitalistic ticket.

It would indeed be interesting if some psychologist could reveal the train of thought and flood of feeling now sweeping through the soul of Judge John J. Parker over the discomfiture which his supplanter has produced in both camps of those who opposed his confirmation.

While it is not proper to condemn or denounce a Judge as to his opinion however detrimentally it may affect one's own interest for the time being, nevertheless, it is hard to hold human nature in restraint when feelings and interests are affected adversely. The four conservative Justices who have stood for capitalism must be credited with the same honesty of purpose as their five confreres who have upheld the opposite view. Justice Roberts is entitled to the same credit for honesty and integrity in the Texas Primary decision and the Railroad Pension Act as in the other instances when he lined up with Chief Justice Hughes and the three other liberal minded members of the Bench, but he can hardly expect the Negro to extol him for the Texas Primary decision or the laboring man in the Railroad Pension case.

All of this but goes to indicate how insecure are hopes and expectations which rest upon the basis of a majority vote of nine men, any one of whom may have the deciding say. A five to four decision is a very slender basis for the hopes and expectations of Democracy. In the meantime, Parker and Roberts will occupy a large place in the musings of the Negro and of the laboring man. Had Parker been confirmed, would it have been different? Would it have been worse or would it have been better? President Hoover, the defeated and disappointed exponent of wealth and power, is doubtless contemplative in his Palo Alto isolation and is indulging in a reminiscent laugh over the discomfiture of the Negro and the laboring man who brought about the defeat of his North Carolina nominee.

### LATE TO CHURCH

By the Rev. Stuart Nye Hutchison, D. D.

(From The Presbyterian).

People do not go late to the railroad station. Time and tide and the railroad wait for no one. They do not go late to the dentist. It may cost them something. They do not go late to weddings. That is an unpardonable breach of good manners. They do not go late to funerals. This also is frowned upon by conventional taste. But they think nothing of going to church late and not only missing the best part of the service, but interfering with the service of others.

It is not a matter of any concern to them when they enter. They may walk in during the responses, or the most solemn part of the worship, the reading of the Scripture. Their favorite point of entry is during a hymn or an anthem, unmindful of the fact that praise is as holy a part of worship as prayer. We have seen people during the congregational prayer, when the heads of people are reverently bowed, push past the remonstrating ushers and up to their seats in

the front of the church. Such irreverence does not often occur but it is often enough to make us feel that a course in church manners might not go amiss in many of our churches.

Let us note in the beginning certain worshippers who are excusable for coming late. One is the mother with little children. I can see one now whom I know. There are four small children in her home. She rises earlier on Sunday than on any other day. When breakfast is over she starts getting them dressed for Sabbath school. By the time the last is washed and bedecked and beribboned, the first, who has had some idle moments on his hands, needs to be washed again. At last they are ready and she gets them to Sabbath school on time. Then she must see to getting the little ones home after Sabbath school, and back to church herself. Is it any wonder she is late sometimes? To me the order is that she comes at all. Give her the best seat in the house. There is no incense in the worship of the sanctuary that comes up with more acceptance on God's altar than that of the mothers who are trying to train their children in the way of the King's commandment.

Another worshipper who is often excusable is the doctor. A distinguished physician, an elder in a church I served, said to me: "I must often miss the church services. I want to be there. I look forward to being there, but you have no idea how utterly inconsiderate many people are of a doctor's time. It never occurs to them that he, too, needs a day of rest. If they have some trifling ailment that needs attention, they put off seeing the doctor until Sunday morning. They could have come on Saturday, or some other day of the week just as well. But no, they wait to see him then. We can't say we will not see anyone on that day, for occasionally there are people who do require immediate attention."

We have good doctors in our own congregation who after a hard morning in the office or the hospital, ministering to human suffering, come to church. God bless them. Let them come when they can. When I see one of them coming up the aisle late, I thank God and take courage.

Then we have some Sabbath school teachers who come in late. They have been teaching up almost to the time of the morning service. The only chance they may have during the week to talk personally to some of their pupils is after the regular lesson. It is their opportunity and we rejoice when they take advantage of it.

It is not of these we are thinking especially, or of others whom dire necessity or accident delays. It is rather of the habitual latecomers. Every church has them, and usually they are excellent people whose conduct in every other respect is beyond reproach.

These good men and women could not give you any reason for their chronic tardiness. It is merely a habit. If we are to form a habit in this regard why not a good one and come on time? People reason thus with themselves: "It matters if I go to business late. It will react unfavorably on that promotion to which I am looking forward. It would not do for me to be late at a social engagement. It may affect unfavorably my social standing. But it does not matter whether I am at church on time or not." But it does matter.

Several reasons are instantly apparent to any one who is really thoughtful. First, the latecomer misses the real heart of the service, some or all of it. The most important part of a church service is not the sermon. It

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