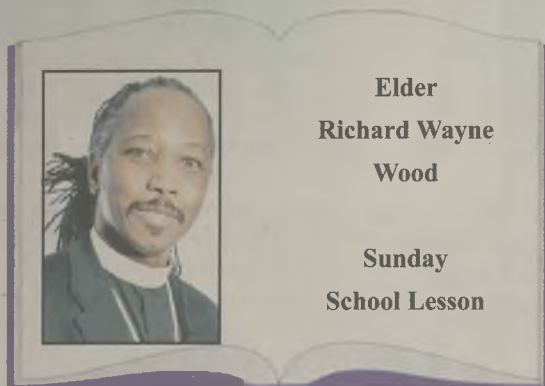


RELIGION



Elder
Richard Wayne
Wood
Sunday
School Lesson

Called to accountability

Scriptures: Amos 5:18-24

By the end of this lesson, we will:

- *Comprehend advocating for all oppressed as a commitment to divine justice and righteousness;
- *Desire fairness for the disadvantaged;
- *Choose to become activists supporting the cause of the poor and oppressed.

Background: Amos was a prophet during the reigns of Jeroboam II, the king of Israel, in the north, and Uzziah, king of Judah, in the south. The book of Amos deals mainly with the malady of Israel, its condemnation and future restoration and glory of Israel within a friendly, renewed physical world. Amos condemns Israel repeatedly for social and political ills. Israel was physically at a time of peace and prosperity; spiritually, however, it was a time of widespread corruption and moral decay. Some of the political and social ills of then Israel are relevant to us now. Note: Prophetic books like Amos are meant to be read again and again, and meditated upon.

Lesson: Because the material prosperity, stability, expansion, and political influence Israel is experiencing is not a result of favor and blessings from God, but are rooted in evil and exploitation of the poor, Amos slaps a "Woe" (prediction of death) on those who are proclaiming the Day of the Lord. The popular understanding of this Day was a day in which Israel would be saved through God's great power. The prophetic suggestion being that God will use His power against His enemies. Amos says "woe" because in this case, the enemy is Israel. To drive home the point, Amos uses images of a lion, bear, and poisonous snake to show Israel how they will escape one danger, only to be confronted with an equally terrifying danger (verses 18-20).

God calls Israel out as hypocritical and very clearly states, "I loathe, I spurn your festivals, I am not appeased by your solemn assemblies." Israel had three national feast days, Passover – the feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost – the feast of Harvest, and Tabernacle or Booth – the feast of Ingathering. They are all directed at thanking God, but God says through Amos that all of the feasts and sacrifices brought by people who behave in a manner offensive to God are unacceptable to God. "If you offer ... I will not accept them." Israel was disobedient and seeking to satisfy Israel and not God. What God wants instead ... "But let justice well up like water, righteousness like an unending stream (verses 21-24). God wants a repentant heart committed to obedience to His Word, morally right, just and fair. UMI (The Jewish Study Bible, The MacArthur Study Bible, and the UMI Annual Commentary 2019 -2020).

For Your Consideration: Why do you think prophesy should be read again and again and meditated on?

Application: God condemns injustice and encourages equitable treatment for all people. Israel was judged because of their mistreatment, exploitation, and neglect of the poor and vulnerable. To avoid the same judgement, we should ask God to enlighten us on ways to use our time, talent, money and other resources to serve others. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matthew 22:37-39)

Ford speaks on impact of Black History Month

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

As Black History Month comes to an end, we have the opportunity to reflect on the sacrifice, hope and stories of those who endured the struggle to enable us to make it to this point in 2020.

Many people have a strong affinity for Black History Month, along with the trailblazers of the Civil Rights Movement. Rev. Paul Robeson Ford, senior pastor of First Baptist Church on Highland Avenue, sat down with The Chronicle to talk about the importance of Black History Month.

The Chronicle: From a pastoral perspective, what does Black History Month mean to you?

Ford: I believe Black History Month for the black community at large, but particularly for the black community of faith, is a time to really reflect on what I talk about in terms of salvation history and the history on how God has delivered us again and again from the many dangers. There are so many moments of glory that we have experienced over the course of our history just in this country, not to mention going back before many of our ancestors were brought here in chains.

I spend most of Black History Month trying to zero in on some of the stories of our people, stories that we know well and in other cases, stories I may be introducing people to for the first time. Stories about moments where we saw people come together and the types of ways they choose to move that demonstrate the highest virtues of faith to which we're called that have led to that success and been the backdrop to those moments of glory. Yesterday with our Friday noon service, was also the anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X. That's a day to talk about some of the other moments outside of glory that we have experienced, but yet and still, the lasting legacy that a man like Malcolm has, whether we are Muslim or Christian, taught us how to be free black men and women and to move that way in pride, with boldness and a sense of truth.

Black History Month becomes an opportunity to make sure our people really are remaining conscious of the complexities of our history and the lesser known stories that need to be told. The fact of the matter is, we struggle now as a community because we lack some of the cohesiveness and shared common purpose that we had during the days when we were under the foot of segregation and oppression.

Black History Month is the month that positions us to zero in on that in a way that other times of the year just may not facilitate as much and it's also a time when the rest of the nation and society is being called upon to pay attention to us a little bit more as well. That becomes an opportunity that people are looking at the right things and it points to the lasting values and virtues that people should associate with our people.

The Chronicle: Is the black community as cohesive and together as they were during the Civil Rights Movement?

Ford: Kevin Cosby has talked about the five institutions that sustain black life. One of them is the black church, another one is the black family, another one is black media, another one is black business and the other is black schools. All of those institutions are struggling now, arguably more than ever before. Part of it is because of the unintended consequences integration played out. The reality is that during the days of segregation, while the levels of oppression were such a greater burden to carry than they are now, because of that reality the black community was generally all in one place. Black people of all class levels living together, exposed to each other, and that lended itself to a more tight-knit community.

Integration, of course, presented this opportunity to move into the white world to take advantage of some of the opportunities that had only been available to whites, but it also meant our people started scattering and moving away. Sometimes for good reasons, seeking a better life, because the drug epidemic settled in and some of our neighborhoods went way down. By spreading out that way, it obviously weakens that solidarity and bond. One of the things that has settled in was the class consciousness and the decision to bond with people of similar class, rather than of similar community.

I constantly tell my folks here, churches like this one, old institutional churches, have been at the center of the lift of the black community. This congregation, over its 141 years, literally runs parallel to much of the history of the black community in Winston and has moved as the community has moved. We started out where the black community was in downtown Winston; we moved over here basically when the black community was doing the same.

The Chronicle: Some say one of the big problems



Submitted photo

Rev. Paul Robeson Ford is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church on Highland Avenue.

with African Americans is that since integration, black people have a sense of complacency and do not have that same drive as we did during the Civil Rights era. Do you agree with that?

Ford: I think there is a sector of our community that is comfortable for themselves, because they have made these shifts, so the sense of urgency gets diminished if you're not still living in the community, or the side of town where you look out your door and the police cars are constantly flying by, or you look down the street and see police, because someone got shot.

Then what has to happen is, there has to be a mindset and there has to be a set of what I call theological commitments, that even if I am now geographically or locationally distanced from the communities of need, which is disproportionately the communities from where I came from, or the people that look like me come from, I am going to go back and work for those communities. That requires another step, it's the mission step. It's the stretching yourself outside of your comfort zone and to go back into places where the need is great and where the challenges are many, but where I would argue the heart of God is.

The Chronicle: Do you feel the importance of Black History Month has been lost with the younger generation?

Ford: You will hear many people lament that our children are not being taught their history anymore. Most of my preaching here, focusing on pulling together biblical insights with the history of our people in an effort to always be uplifting, especially for our younger people to make sure what they are not getting in school or at home, they will get in the church.

I am going to always make it a point that the teaching of our history is weaved into everything we do here, and I think we need to try and do that elsewhere also. We cannot and should not rely upon the public-school system or other spaces to be doing the work for years we have done in our community institutions and spaces. We as black churches and black people have the responsibility to make sure our children know our story and know our history and they can take that out into the rest of the world.

The Chronicle: Was there a particular person that inspired you from the Civil Rights era?

Ford: As I said yesterday from the pulpit, much of the fire in my preaching and public witness was inspired by the legacy of Malcolm X. I tell people constantly, there is a big difference in the mindset that it leaves you with, to come from a city with a Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, you won't have a hard time finding it in any community with a dozen black people. But I come from a city with a Malcolm X Boulevard and you will have a hard time finding those around this country.

Malcolm X and his work permeated the consciousness of so much of the black community, not just in Harlem, but beyond. His death was so traumatizing, but his legacy has remained so strong and it impacted me directly just being in that city where he worked so

See Ford on B6

RELIGION CALENDAR

NOW – March 1

Quarterly meeting

The North Carolina Area of the Northwestern District of the Holiness Church of God, Inc., Quarterly meeting will convene at Kimberly Park Holiness Church, located at 1640 S M Caesar Drive, beginning Wednesday, Feb. 26, through Sunday, March 1. Overseer Robert Edmond is the host pastor. The theme for this session is "And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:3). Weeknight services start at 7:30 p.m. and the Sunday service begins at 4 p.m.

TODAY, Feb. 27

Pop-up Bible study

Greater Faith Empowerment Church (GFEC) will be having Bible study at a pop-up location on Thursday, Feb. 27, from 7 – 8 p.m. Bible Study for tonight will be held at the Stafford Place Apartments, 1140 Stafford Place Circle, in the movie theater space (next to the leasing office). GFEC will host Bible study at various venues within the city limits throughout the year. For more information, see the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/greaterfaith>.

Feb. 27

Speaker series

Faith & Justice Committee of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 520 Summit St., presents the In My Backyard: Faith and Current Events Speaker Series on Thursday, Feb. 27, at 12:15-1:15 p.m. Dr. Richard Groves, who is the former pastor of Wake Forest Baptist Church and

professor of religion and philosophy, will be the speaker. The topic will be "Things I Never Heard a White Person Say." The conversation is to explore what words say about our stance on race. Bring a bag lunch if you wish. Beverages and cookies will be provided.

Feb. 29

Black History Program

The Modernistic Club presents its 3rd annual Black History Month Program, "Leaping Into History For The Future" on Saturday, Feb. 29, at 2 p.m. The event will feature District Court Judge Denise S. Hartsfield and will be held at Sharon Baptist Church, 3890 US Highway 220, Stoneville. The event is free to the public.

March 1

Sunday service

St. Philips Moravian Church, 911 S. Church St., will worship at 11 a.m., March 1. We shall celebrate Holy Communion on this First Sunday of Lent. The Rev. Sandra Thigpen will lead the service and preach. Welcome!

March 1

Worship services

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4055 Rob-inhood Road, will have two services Sunday, March 1. The speaker at both 9 and 11 a.m. will be Don Kautz, a retired nursing professor. At the Forum, 9:15 a.m., Fellowship president Mary Law will lead a discussion of the search for a minister, plans for our grounds and the annual budget. For more information, see UUFWS.org.

March 5 - April 9

Lenten Revival Services

Mount Zion Baptist Church, 950 File Street, will hold Lenten Revival Services at 7 p.m. on Thursday evenings from March 5 thru April 9. The theme is "The Worthy Lamb." Good Friday Service at noon on April 10 will feature "The Seven Last Words of Jesus."

Dr. Serenus T. Churn Sr. is the host pastor. Guest ministers are listed as follows:

*Thursday, March 5, Rev. James Clyburn, Red Bank Baptist Church

*Thursday, March 12, Dr. C. Anthony Jones Jr., United Cornerstone Baptist Church

*Thursday, March 19, Dr. Verenander Hughes, Genesis Baptist Church in Greensboro

*Thursday, March 26, Dr. Dennis Leach, Morning Star Baptist Church

*Thursday, April 2, Rev. Clarence Cox, Hanes CME Church

*Thursday, April 9, Dr. Paul Lowe, Shiloh Baptist Church

How to submit items to the Religion calendar:

The deadline is Sunday at 11:59 p.m. to have all calendar items submitted for that week's paper. Send your calendar items to news@wschronicle.com. You can also drop them off, Monday through Friday before 5 p.m., or mail your items to Winston-Salem Chronicle, 1300 E. Fifth St., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101; or send them via our website, www.wschronicle.com.