

February 19, 2017

Reverend Dr. Brigitte A. Black

## Not Without A Struggle

[Joshua 1:12-15](#)

The promise of rest is not without a struggle. We think because it is promised to us it will be given on a silver platter. Freedom is not free. Liberty and justice is not without a struggle. Peace is not the mere absence of war, but it is the presence of justice. That's why many social protest groups chant, No justice, No peace. If we really want freedom, justice, liberty and peace it will take some struggle. Systems and stinking thinking have to be changed. Some systems have built in bias and it has to be pointed out and dismantled. Therefore, we have to work together to tell our story and let others sit with it. Our story is necessary in helping others to understand our plight and fight. We have to lead the charge for change, justice, liberty, freedom and peace.

In our text, the children of Israel are about to enter into the Promised Land. In Genesis chapter twelve, God promised Abram the land of Canaan. The children of Israel were about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. It had been a forty year journey to Canaan. The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh inheritance was east of the Jordan. They did not have to cross over and fight. But they would not be at rest until everyone was at rest.

Do not think because you have arrived at your Promised Land that you do not have to help your brothers and sisters. No one will be at rest until all are at rest. No justice, no peace. We all have to work towards a more just society so that the world can experience peace. Our communities need all hands on deck working towards peaceful solutions. Economic and educational disparity must be resolved. Justice is sorting out what rightfully belongs to whom and distributing the goods and services and access to them equitably. In conclusion, we have to struggle for a more fair, equitable, and just world. God needs us to stand up and speak out. We must awake, rise, and act!

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### Prayer

Almighty and awesome God, we have gathered to lift up your name and praise your mighty acts. You are full of mercy and grace. Forgive us of our sin of complacency and silence. Grant us a holy boldness to speak up and out. God cure your children's warring madness. Let us be instruments of peace. Pour out your wisdom upon the leadership of this country. This we pray in the name and power of Jesus Christ.

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### Stewardship Moment

***Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing ...Proverbs 3:9-10a NIV***

We are at a critical junction in the life of God's church and in our country. Our communities are

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being infested with destruction, drugs, and despair. People are looking for answers. The state of Illinois is yet again without a budget. This will affect many social service agencies and schools. The country is reeling and rocking from executive orders that affect refugees, immigration, and the ecology. We Christians, know the solution is a personal relationship with God. During times of trouble, turmoil, and tragedy we look to God for comfort and strength and are assured that through it all God is faithful and just. We seek to be more "God-centered" less stressed by the cares of the world that keep us self-centered. To be God-Centered requires that we set our affections on things above and seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness. It means to cast our cares on the LORD and He will sustain us because He will never let the righteous fall. [Psalm 55:22] Our desire is to allow God to rule and reign over finances, health, security, family, and every area of our lives.

Therefore, in order to glorify God in our giving we desire the church to become a 100% tithing church. As we move closer and closer to becoming a 100% tithing church, God will continue to pour us out blessings that we will not have room enough to receive. If you do not tithe regularly, we ask that you would bring your firstfruits to God. The concept of firstfruits offering is rooted in the biblical context of bringing the firstborn of the flocks, first vegetables and first grains to the Lord. The first was considered the best portion of what one has to give. In Deuteronomy 26:10-11 says, "and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household." This firstfruits were given in gratitude for the abundant blessings God had bestowed on the people. Beginning Sunday, March 5, 2017, and every first Sunday, the members and friends of Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church are going to celebrate the goodness of the LORD by bringing their firstfruits to God. The call is for every member to honor God by obeying God's mandate to give your tithes and offerings.

- If you are not a tither, the call is for you to step out on faith and give a full tithe on Sunday, March 5, 2017 and thereafter.
- If you currently tithe from your net income, the call is for you to tithe from your gross income.
- If you currently divide your tithe among various ministries and accounts on the envelope, the call is for you to give the full tithe on the line marked Tithe/Offering. Any amount over the tithe would be given to the various ministries.
- If you currently are tithing from your gross, the call is for you to give, in addition to the tithe, a tithe of the tithe, (10% more than the tithe), or a special sacrificial offering in thanksgiving to God's love, mercy, and grace.
- We need to step out on faith and believe God's word for all of our sustenance. God has said, "I will supply your every need." Give glory to God through generous giving. The Church of Wayman has been called to mount up with wings of eagle and soar.

***"One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."* [Proverbs 11:24-25 (NIV)]**

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### Scripture Reference

[Joshua 1:12-15](#)

*New Living Translation (NLT)*

<sup>12</sup>Then Joshua called together the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He told them, <sup>13</sup>“Remember what Moses, the servant of the LORD, commanded you: ‘The LORD your God is giving you a place of rest. He has given you this land.’ <sup>14</sup>Your wives, children, and livestock may remain here in the land Moses assigned to you on the east side of the Jordan River. But your strong warriors, fully armed, must lead the other tribes across the Jordan to help them conquer their territory. Stay with them <sup>15</sup>until the LORD gives them rest, as he has given you rest, and until they, too, possess the land the LORD your God is giving them. Only then may you return and settle here on the east side of the Jordan River in the land that Moses, the servant of the LORD, assigned to you.”