



REVIVAL

Sunday, July 24, 2011

(The featured video is of the late Reverend Caesar A.W. Clark concluding a revival. Be sure to view additional great Revival videos below.)

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The unit you are viewing, Revival, is a compact unit. This means that it is not a complete commentary of the Scripture(s) selected for this day on the calendar, nor does it have a full, supporting cultural resource unit and worship unit. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided a sermon outline, songs, suggested books, and suggested articles, links, and videos. For additional information, see Revival in the archives of the Lectionary for 2008, 2009, and 2010. 2011 is the first year that the African American Lectionary has posted compact units for moments on its liturgical calendar.

I. Description of the Liturgical Moment

Dr. Ralph D. West writes in the 2009 Revival II commentary:

In many African American congregations, revival services are held not just for one night but for two, three, four, or five nights, often with the same preacher. This pattern suggests that revival is ongoing and cannot be contained or limited to one moment. God wants to continually revive us and make us alive in him.

Dr. Luke A. Powery wrote in the 2008 Revival I unit:

The word “revival” stems from the Latin word *revivere* which means “to live again.” This definition implies that something has died. Historically, the Great Awakenings of the 18th and 19th centuries were spiritual revivals that sparked new life in “dead” Christians. Revival meetings were prevalent among Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists, and were known for intense emotive preaching, lively singing, ecstatic behavior, and enthusiastic congregational response, which eventually attracted many black slaves because of the connection with their African heritage and forms of dance and song. The main emphasis of these revival services was personal conversion to Christ and, as a result, these revivals played an important role in the large conversion of black slaves to Christianity. The revival crowds swelled because of the presence of blacks. Some enslaved and free blacks were given the opportunity to serve as exhorters or preachers to

white and black audiences during these revivals, although there was also opposition to having blacks assume this type of leadership role.

“Revival” can refer to a spontaneous outpouring of God’s presence on a people, such as the 1906 Azusa Street revival that sparked the spread of the Pentecostal movement. However, it has mainly become institutionalized among African American congregations as a regular part of the church’s calendar, manifesting perhaps as fall and spring revival services on consecutive nights. The general foci of these services are still on conversion and the renewal of the spiritual life of individuals and communities. Moreover, a strong tradition of powerful preaching, usually from an invited guest preacher, heartfelt singing, and stirring testimonies, persists. Some denominations even have ordained revivalists whose main ministry is to preach in congregations with the intended purpose of stirring revival, bringing a “dead” congregation back to life with the help of God. This liturgical moment suggests that God wants us fully alive!¹

With this material as our backdrop, we provide a sermon outline for Revival.

II. Revival: Sermonic Outline

A. Sermonic Focus Text(s): Nehemiah 4:1-15 (New Revised Standard Version)

(v. 1) Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he mocked the Jews. (v. 2) He said in the presence of his associates and of the army of Samaria, ‘What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore things? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish—and burnt ones at that?’ (v. 3) Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, ‘That stone wall they are building—any fox going up on it would break it down!’ (v. 4) Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their taunt back on their own heads, and give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. (v. 5) Do not cover their guilt, and do not let their sin be blotted out from your sight; for they have hurled insults in the face of the builders.

(v.6) So we rebuilt the wall, and all the wall was joined together to half its height; for the people had a mind to work.

(v. 7) But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and the gaps were beginning to be closed, they were very angry, (v. 8) and all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. (v. 9) So we prayed to our God, and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

(v. 10) But Judah said, ‘The strength of the burden-bearers is failing, and there is too much rubbish, so that we are unable to work on the wall.’ (v. 11) And our enemies said, ‘They will not know or see anything before we come upon them and kill them and stop the work.’ (v. 12) When the Jews who lived near them came, they said to us ten times, ‘From all the places where they live they will come up against us.’ (v. 13) So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. (v. 14) After I looked these things over, I stood up and said to the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people, ‘Do not be afraid of them. Remember the

LORD, who is great and awesome, and fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.’

(v. 15) When our enemies heard that their plot was known to us, and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his work.

B. Possible Titles

- i. Revived for Good Reason
- ii. Rebuilding Our Community
- iii. What It Takes to Rebuild

C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry

In any text there can be several words or phrases that require significant exegetical inquiry. One exegetical inquiry raised by this text is its authorship. Was the book of Nehemiah written by Nehemiah? Grouped as a single book with the title “Ezra,” Nehemiah was accepted into the canon of Scripture around the middle of the 2nd century BCE, when it was translated into Greek. They were first divided into separate books by the early Christian scholar Origen, in the 3rd century CE, and the separation became entrenched in the 5th century CE when it was followed by Jerome in his Latin translation of the Bible. It was not until the Middle Ages that the separation was introduced into Jewish Bibles.² Because of the close connection between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, one person might have written or compiled all three books. Those who follow this argument refer to the author as the Chronicler.

III. Introduction

Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah, is the main character in the book which bears his name. Nehemiah is a cup-bearer to the King of Persia (Artaxerxes). He learned that the walls of his beloved Jerusalem were in decay and received permission from the king to go and rebuild the walls. Such rebuilding would enhance the security of Persia. Opposition to his work begins in chapter two and continues in our text. Nehemiah faces opposition from the Samaritans, Ammonites, Arabs, and Philistines.

Nehemiah set out to do a good work. Although this was admirable, it also brought him opposition. The work of God has always been faced with opposition. Whether one tries to save a neighborhood from gun violence, get the homeless fed, get schools to serve children, or get fair wages for workers, though all good, such work will be accompanied by opposition. Opposition is to be expected whenever one stands to do something good and significant, and the bigger the task the greater the opposition. If what is to be done is a community-wide project, which is what Nehemiah faced, the leader will have to contend with opposition from without and also with complaints, perhaps cowardice and even confusion, from within.

With so much to do, so many to feed, so many to house, so many in need, Lord, we need a revival. Revival can give us the fire we need to “bring even “dead” congregations back to life with the help of God and can give those already hard at work new energy to face the almost overwhelming work that must be done now.

Revivals are intended to renew us, to fire us up again, not just give us a warm and cozy happy feeling. Let's get ready to work.

IV. Moves/Points

Move/Point One – Enemies appear when you try to do good work.

- a. The Black community is facing enemies as did Nehemiah;
- b. Our enemies will taunt us and minimize our ability; and
- c. We must turn our enemies over to God while we keep working.

Move/Point Two – We cannot stop until our goal is achieved.

- a. Many efforts have begun but were not completed;
- b. The closer we come to completing a goal, the more intense our enemies become; and
- c. Do not believe that the obstacles can stop you from building.

Move/Point Three – We may have to regroup to stop enemies as we build for God.

- a. Their enemies became more fierce;
- b. Nehemiah devised a plan to fight as they worked; and
- c. As you fight and work, remember the Lord.

V. Celebration

Many are the enemies of great works for God. But, if you are infused with the Spirit of God, have a cause for which you are willing to give your all, and have a made-up mind, you can't be stopped. Nothing is more feared than a black man or woman with a made-up mind to stand for God. When a revival sweeps through our homes, our churches, and our communities, we'll see boys putting down guns. We'll see young women stand as queens. We'll run out poverty. We'll run out addiction. We'll run out mediocrity. Lord, I feel the winds of revival. There are still knees that have not bowed to Baal. There are still men who will fight injustice. There are still women strong as Harriet and as determined as Fannie Lou. Lord, I feel a revival of my people.

Back when I was a boy they sang a song that said:

Oh Lord I'm runnin' tryin' to make a hundred,
Ninety-nine and a half just won't do. I got to make a hundred.

I'm runnin' (Lord I'm running trying to make a hundred)
trying to make a hundred (Lord I'm runnin' trying to make a hundred)
Ninety-nine and a half just won't do

I'm prayin' (Lord I'm praying trying to make a hundred)
trying to make a hundred (Lord I'm prayin' trying to make a hundred)
Ninety-nine and a half just won't do

No it won't do (No no no it won't do)
it won't do (no no no it won't do)
Oh it won't do (no no no it won't do)
It won't do
It won't do
Just won't do
Ninety-nine and a half just won't do

Ninety-one
Ninety-two
Ninety-three
Ninety-four
Ninety-five
Ninety-six
Ninety-seven
Ninety-eight
Ninety-nine and a half just won't do.

VI. Illustration

Christian Effectiveness

...[I]f you ever watch bowling on ESPN—you will notice that these bowling contests have really gotten sophisticated. They now have bowling pants, bowling shirts, bowling gloves, fancy bowling balls, bowling bags—just bowling everything. I also noticed their bowling stances. I've seen a bowler put his finger in the ball and put his hand on the other side, and make his way down the alley, and then flick his wrist to get the spin he wants and then kick out his leg. Some of the styles are sweet. However, help me understand this: What good is it to have new bowling pants, a new bowling shirt, new bowling gloves, a new bowling ball, and a new bowling bag, if you're rolling the ball down the gutter? I've discovered a lot of us are looking good rolling gutter balls. The test of a bowler is not in his style, or in his look, but it's in his impact.

How many pins have you knocked down? If you're not knocking down any pins, don't tell me how good you look.

—William Robinson, "Living a Purposeful Life."
The African American Pulpit, Fall 2007, p. 85

This illustration is taken from the Sermon Illustrations section of the African American Lectionary. See the Sermon Illustrations section of the African American Lectionary for

additional illustrations that you may wish to use in presenting a sermon for this moment on the liturgical calendar.

VII. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in This Passage

The sounds, sights, and colors in this passage include:

Sounds: People talking; a person mocking another, people building a wall; people praying; a guard walking back and forth;

Sights: A group of people constructing a wall using bricks from rubble; a fox climbing a wall; people gathering to plot someone's downfall; people stationed around a wall avoiding attack, people holding swords, spears, and bows; and

Colors: The dirt-stained clothes of the builders; dark bricks covered with soot; a dark wall; the colors of rubbish; a silver sword; and a silver spear.

VIII. Songs to Accompany This Sermon

A. Well-Known Song(s)

- Lord, Send a Revival. Traditional

Lord, send a revival.
Lord, send a revival.
Lord, send a revival
and let it begin with me.

Lord, we need a revival.
Lord, we need a revival
Lord, we need a revival
and let it begin with me.

- Revive Us Again. By Charlene Moore Cooper. Tune by John W. Robinson, Jr.
- The Presence of the Lord. By Kurt Carr

B. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2010)

- Souled Out. By Estee Bullock and Nathan S. McNair
- Renewed. By Sherri Jones Moffett

- I Will Rejoice. By William Murphy III
- Incredible God/Praise. By Youthful Praise

C. Spiritual(s)

- Renewal. By Charlene Moore Cooper. Tune by Dr. John W. Robinson Jr.
- Precious Jesus. Text and Tune by Thomas A. Whitfield
- Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters. By Ruth Duck. Tune, (BEACH SPRING), by B.F. White
- Spirit of the Living God. Text and Tune, (IVERSON), by Daniel Iverson

D. Invitational Song(s)

- I Give Myself Away. By Sam Hinn and William McDowell
- He Wants It All. By Forever Jones

IX. Videos, Audio, and/or Interactive Media

- Reverend Jasper Williams Jr. of Atlanta in Revival concluding a sermon.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2qUlz8HAYw&feature=related>
- Reverend Rudolph McKissick Jr. concluding a sermon in a revival.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMUUNj_OPw4&feature=related
- Reverend Charles Booth preaching revival at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church in Dallas, TX.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewLffD0AdWQ&feature=related>
- Lashawn Pace performing “I Know I Have Been Changed” at a revival.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRvAcCgDS14&feature=player_embedded

X. Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons or Bible Studies Related to Revival

- Abington, James. Readings in African American Church Music and Worship. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2009.

- Banks, William L. The Black Church in the US. Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing.com, 2001.
- Battle, Michael. The Black Church in America: African American Christian Spirituality. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Johnson, Alonzo and Paul T Jersild. Ain't Gonna Lay My 'ligion Down : African American Religion in the South. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.
- Lincoln, Charles E. and Lawrence H. Mamiya. The Black Church in the African American Experience. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990.

XI. Links to Helpful Websites for Revival

- See the article by Shawn James. “The Blacks Church Needs a Revival.” Online location: <http://www.onixlink.com/lifestyle/faith/17633-the-black-church-needs-a-revival.html> accessed 4 February 2011
- See the article by Jamaal Bell. “The Social Impact of Three American Revivals.” Online location: <http://www.jamaalbell.com/?p=74> accessed 4 February 2011

XII. Notes for Select Songs

A. Well-Known Song(s)

- Revive Us Again. By Charlene Moore Cooper. Tune by John W. Robinson, Jr.
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #569
- The Presence of the Lord. By Kurt Carr
Location:
Cage, Byron. Live at New Birth Cathedral. Inglewood, CA: Gospocentric Records, 2003.

B. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2000-2010)

- Souled Out. By Estee Bullock and Nathan S. McNair
Location:
Walker, Hezekiah. Souled Out. New York, NY: Verity Records, 2008.

- Renewed. By Sherri Jones Moffett
Location:
Renewed. Brentwood, TN: EMI Gospel, 2009.
- I Will Rejoice. By William Murphy III
Location:
The Sound. Stone Mountain, GA: Murphy3Ministries, 2007.
- Incredible God/Praise. By Youthful Praise
Location:
Best of Youthful Praise. Nashville, TN: Light Records, 2008.

C. Spiritual(s)

- Renewal. By Charlene Moore Cooper. Tune by John W. Robinson Jr.
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #570
- Precious Jesus. Text and Tune by Thomas A. Whitfield
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #576
- Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters. By Ruth Duck. Tune, (BEACH SPRING), by B.F. White
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #674
- Spirit of the Living God. Text and Tune, (IVERSON), by Daniel Iverson
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #320

D. Invitational Songs

- I Give Myself Away. By Sam Hinn and William McDowell
Location:
McDowell, William. As We Worship Live. New York, NY: Koch Records, 2009.
- He Wants It All. By Forever Jones
Location:
Get Ready. Brentwood, TN: EMI Gospel, 2009.

Notes

1. Raboteau, Albert J. Slave Religion: “The Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 128–150.
2. Graham, M.P, and Steven L. McKenzie. The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998, p. 202.