



YOUNG ADULT SUNDAY

Sunday, May 22, 2011

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The unit you are viewing, Young Adult Sunday, is a compact unit. This means that it does not have a supporting cultural resource unit and worship unit. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided scriptural text(s) that we suggest for this moment on the calendar along with a sermonic outline, suggested links, books, articles, songs, and videos. For additional information, see Young Adult Sunday 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: Young Adult Sunday

Terriel R. Byrd wrote in the 2010 African American Lectionary commentary for Young Adult Sunday:

In the Black Church, more often than not, young adults are just waiting their turn to be able to use the gifts and talents given them by the Creator in the Church and world community. Young adults often challenge middle-age and older adults to think differently and more deeply about our traditions and values and what really matters. On this Sunday, we affirm our young adults (persons 18–35 in some quarters of the Black community and 18–40 in others) as we focus our attention on the present and future generation of leaders.

Maria Mallory White wrote in the 2009 African American Lectionary cultural resources unit for Young Adult Sunday:

Who are today's African American young adults? At what point can one be considered "adult," younger or otherwise? Generally speaking, three age-range classifications offer some initial help in answering this question: childhood (birth to 13), adolescence (13–17), and adulthood (18+).¹ Using these categories, African American young adults "are those persons who are in the age group which characterizes those who have graduated their public high school system (provided they have successfully kept pace with their required course of study). That is, young adulthood commences around 17 or 18 years of age."² However, let it also be clear that in many quarters of the African American Church, we often consider as young adults to be those who are between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. Yes! That is quite a wide window of age ranges. Many of us also know about the black church Young Adult Choir which typically contains persons who are forty! But, that's another story for another time.

Along with the counting of years, emergent young adulthood is marked by certain characteristic signs of maturity that are demonstrated "economically, psychologically, socially, in accountability, emotionally, in values, the community, volitionally and spiritually."³ In today's society, young adulthood is typically a person's first foray into major financial responsibility, living on their own, and independent decision making. Historically, our African ancestors used rites of passage to clearly delineate the transition from adolescence to adulthood. These were not only ritualistic signposts designating a change in age but also a shift in expectations. In his paper titled "Passages: Birth, Initiation, Marriage and Death," Paul Hill Jr., founder of the Rites of Passage Institute in Cleveland, Ohio, writes:

"When comparing African-American culture to West and Central African culture, one finds in some African cultures definite rituals which youth must experience in order to be recognized as adults. These activities prepare young people in matters of sexual life, marriage, procreation and family/community responsibilities, while fulfilling a great educational purpose. The occasion often marks the beginning of acquiring knowledge which is not otherwise accessible to those who have not been initiated. It is an awakening, a new day for the young. They learn to endure hardships. They learn to live with one another. They learn the secrets and mysteries of male-female relationships."⁴

As Hill points out, "that part of our rich African inheritance characterized by traditions of personal mastery and locus of control through the ritualization of social relationships has

been lost.”⁵ His organization promotes the renewed use of rites of passage. Across the nation, churches and social organizations have begun instituting such rituals for initiation into African American manhood and womanhood. Others use typical North American rites of passage, which include baptisms and confirmations, school graduation ceremonies, weddings, retirement parties, and funerals.⁶ There can be, however, a certain danger inherent in the loss of cultural and community rites of passage. “Bereft of the explicit framing of rites, unconscious and unintentional activities displace conscious and intentional ones, often with deadly consequences,” Hill warns.⁷

In the Black Church and African American community, there are still expectations of maturation, formally and informally, individually and collectively documented. Lately, there has been significant focus in delineating the differences between the Moses and the Joshua generations as Civil Rights-era African Americans remember that time as the high watermark of black activism and social advancement and, more often than not, lament the Hip Hop Generation’s prospects of carrying the baton. This discussion (spoken and unspoken) occurs in churches as young adult pastors step forward and pastors over sixty are asked to move from one vista of ministry to another, and as young political leaders step forward and political leaders over sixty are asked to make room for these young politicians. Many are asking: are today’s African American young adults ready to lead and help our community hold on to hard-fought gains?

With this backdrop in mind, the following sermonic outline is offered for Young Adult Sunday.

II. Young Adult Sunday: Sermonic Outline

A. Sermonic Focus Texts: Exodus 13:17-18 and 14:1-4 (New Revised Standard Version)

Exodus 13:17-18

(v. 17) When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer; for God thought, ‘If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt.’ (v. 18) So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness towards the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle.

Exodus 14:1-4

(v. 1) Then the LORD said to Moses: (v. 2) ‘Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall camp opposite it, by the sea. (v. 3) Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, “They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them.” (v. 4) I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, so that I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.’ And they did so.

B. Possible Titles

- i. The Long Road to Destiny

- ii. The Road Less Traveled
- iii. The Detour That Leads to Your Destiny

C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry

In the book of Exodus the Egyptians referred to the road that God decided not to use as The Way to the Land of the Philistines. This route was the shortest route from Egypt to Canaan. It would have only taken the Israelites nine to ten days to reach their Canaan had they taken this route; the alternative route took them forty years. However, the route that they did not take posed grave danger to the militarily untrained and unequipped Israelites because it was a common route used by some of the finest militaries of the day. A massacre was inevitable had the Israelites chosen that route. Every Israelite over age twenty died in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land, but the entire nation would have been killed or enslaved had the Israelites taken the shortest route.⁸

III. Introduction

The great poet Robert Frost penned a poem close to 100 years ago that is relevant to all of us today. In his poem “The Road Not Taken” he concludes with, “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

These words are especially pertinent to young adults because we stand at the crossroads of life trying to decide the best road that leads to spiritual, professional, social, and personal success. Unfortunately, two of the main determinants for the road we choose are its length and the speed limit at which we are permitted to travel. Since we live in a society that promotes instant gratification with such things as on-demand movies, instant music downloads, and instant access to much of the world via phones and apps, many of us choose the short, quick road to success. We forgo graduate school because we want success now! We skip saving and managing our money because we want the big house and the latest gadgets now! As a result, like the millions of people who travel the short, quick road to success before us, we often end up disappointed. But as the poem suggests, if you want to be in the minority and get different results, then you must be willing to travel down the long, less traveled road to success.

Similar to young adults, the Children of Israel in the text were at life’s crossroads trying to determine the best road that leads to the Promised Land. God did not direct them to the quick, short road to success because the One who is all-knowing realized that it would lead to grave disappointment. So, God directed them to the less traveled road, and that has made all the difference.

IV. Moves/Points

Move/Point 1 – God sometimes directs us to less-traveled roads

- a. God is aware of all possible roads our lives can take;

- b. The shortest route isn't always the best route; and
- c. The less-traveled road leads to the Promised Land.

Move/Point 2 – God puts us on a path that is designed for our success

- a. God is aware of what we are equipped to do;
- b. God knows how we will respond to the opposition we face; and
- c. God's plan is for us to move forward, not backward.

Move/Point 3 – God provides wherever God leads

- a. Follow God even when it does not make sense;
- b. The route God chooses for your life has a Divine purpose; and
- c. God is never confined by the limitations we see in a route he chooses.

V. Celebration

God not only led the Israelites to the Red Sea, but God also led them *through* the Red Sea. It shouts me to know that God not only has a “bring you to it” ministry—he also has a “got you through it” ministry. God brought the three Hebrew boys to the fiery furnace and then turned around and got them through it. God brought Daniel to the lion's den and then turned around and got him through it. That's good news! If God brings you to college, God will get you through it. If God bring you to seminary, God will get you through it. If God brings you to law school, God will bring you through it. If God brings you to it, rest assured he will bring you through it. We serve a will-get-you-through-it God. That was a word for the Israelites. That is a word for these days. That is a word for every young adult. If we hold on to that God and where he leads, that will make all the difference.

VI. Illustrations

Rerouting, Rerouting

Now, you don't have to go to a gas station to ask what is the quickest way to get from point A to point B. All you need to do is pull out your handy Global Positioning System (GPS). Plug in the address and simply follow the directions. One day as I was driving with a friend, we decided to use my GPS to get where we were going. The GPS said turn right and we turned right. The GPS said enter I-85 and we entered I-85. However, when the GPS said make a right, I was running my mouth so I did not hear the GPS correctly. Instead of making a right, I told my friend to make a left. Because we were listening to my voice and not the voice of the GPS, when we turned left, the GPS said “You are now off track.” But I'm so glad the GPS did not stop there. A second later, it said, “Rerouting, rerouting, rerouting.” Isn't that like the GPS? I'm not referring to the

Global Positioning System. I'm talking about God's Positioning System. When we get off track God starts rerouting.

— Eustacia Moffett Marshall, Charlotte, North Carolina

Lessons from the Highway

If you've ever done highway driving, then you know what it means to have a road partner. I was on the road one day and along came another vehicle. We had instant road synergy. We were ruling I-75. He'd cut between a truck, I'd cut between a truck. He'd speed up. I'd speed up. He'd slow down. I'd slow down. We were ruling I-75. But then I saw my exit. I changed lanes, but he didn't change lanes. I began to slow down but he didn't slow down. My exit grew closer. The longer I stayed on the road, the bigger my signs became. I wondered, "Does he see the signs that I'm seeing?" Next exit 2 miles. Next exit 1 mile. Next exit 1/2 mile. Your exit HERE! So I had to make a choice. Do I stay on this road and head to someone else's destination, or do I take my exit and go where I'm supposed to be? I wonder how many people have missed their exits trying to follow someone else?

— Janae Pitts, Memphis, Tennessee

GPS Stops Talking

My husband recently purchased a GPS (a global positioning system) for our car. It is a nifty device that allows you to input your destination and then it gives you turn-by-turn directions to your destination. To get the full benefit of the GPS you have to listen and obey its instructions. It will continue to give instructions as long as you attempt to obey them. Now, if you miss your turn it will say, "Recalculating! Recalculating!" and then give you new instructions to get back on the right course. Interestingly, if you continue to do things your way and refuse to follow the instructions, it automatically stops speaking. I guess the GPS figures there is no reason for it to keep speaking because you obviously know where you're going. Maybe some of us haven't heard from God lately because our actions suggest we don't need God's advice to reach our destination. We think we know where we're going.

— Carmen Avery, Atlanta, Georgia

These illustrations were taken from the Sermon Illustrations section of The African American Lectionary.

VII. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in These Passages

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

Sounds: People rejoicing; millions of people marching; sticks on the ground being broken as people step on them; the sounds of creatures and animals in the wilderness; people singing in the wilderness; people praying in the wilderness; people grumbling in the wilderness; people crying in the wilderness; people worshiping in the wilderness;

Sights: Thousands of trees; miles and miles of water; dirt roads; possessions the people carried with them from Egypt; tents set up in the wilderness, everyone walking in the same direction; and

Colors: The colors of the wilderness landscape.

VIII. Songs to Use to Accompany This Sermon

A. Hymn(s)

- Just as I Am. By Charlotte Elliott
Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBK9sNzCVj0>
- There Is a Fountain. By William Cowper

B. Well-known Song(s)

- My Name Is Victory. By Jonathan Nelson and Justin Savage
Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WoGBvtN--8&feature=related>
- The Winner in Me. By Michael Clemmons, Kerry A. Smith, and Arthur Strong

C. Modern Songs (Written between 2000–2010)

- My Destiny. By Stephen Hurd
Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kNCnALqQMI>
- I Can Only Imagine. By Bart Millard
- Lead Me Jesus (Remix). By Gregory O'Quin
Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljUdv4-3Wgw&feature=related>
- Great Expectations. By JJ Hairston
Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_YhaBS8J10

D. Invitational Song(s)

- I Need You Now. By Smokie Norful
Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDpY-2M5dVo&feature=related>
- More Abundantly. By Ricky Dillard
Youtbue: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtYZKkftiJY>

You can review past Lectionary worship units, 2008–2010, to find additional songs and suggestions for planning a worship service for this liturgical moment.

IX. Helpful Videos, Audios and/or Interactive Media

- *The Pursuit of Happyness* – See the final scene of movie when Chris Gardner's hard work finally pays off. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78jCozgEBdM> accessed 6 February 2011.

- AIM Young Adult Ministry at Kelly Temple C.O.G.I.C.—Lifehouse—Everything. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M05xrkE9FZE> accessed 1 February 2011
- Consider having a Christian Comedy show to attract young adults. Here is an advertisement for one held by West Angeles Young Adult Ministries. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boVpUffISug> accessed 5 February 2011
- Two clips by Rod of God. Amazing Grace (Christian/Gospel Comedian Rod Z). Online location: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYtra3q_zy8&feature=related ; and Funerals in Black and White...Rod of God Comedy. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ll6-OjMW9WY&feature=related> Online location: accessed 5 February 2011
- YAM MINISTRY (Tuesday Night Bible Study) January 18, 2011 COGIC. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVjfk7B1aaA> accessed 5 February 2011

X. Books and Articles to Assist in Preparing Sermons or Bible Studies Related to Young Adults

- Anonymous: Unrecognized Riches in Uncelebrated Seasons of Your Life. Chole, Alicia. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006.
- Generation Earn: The Young Professional's Guide to Spending, Investing, and Giving Back. Palmer, Kimberly. New York, NY: Random, 2010.
- Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith. Parks, Sharon. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- The Rose That Grew from Concrete. Shakur, Tupac. New York, NY: Pocket, 1999.
- Black Young Adults: How to Reach Them, What to Teach Them. McCray, Walter A. Chicago, IL: Black Light Fellowship, 1992. Online location: <http://www.blacklightfellowship.com/> accessed 1 February 2011
- The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture. Smith, Efreem, and Phil Jackson. Nottingham, UK: IVP Books, 2005.
- From Jay-Z to Jesus: Reaching and Teaching Young Adults in the Black Church. Stephens, Benjamin, and Ralph C. Watkins. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009.
- The Gospel Remix: Reaching the Hip Hop Generation. Watkins, Ralph C., Jason A. Barr, Jamal-Harrison Bryant, William H. Curtis, and Otis Moss III. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007.

XI. Links to Helpful Websites for Young Adult Sunday

- “COGIC International Youth Dept. Young Adult Ministry—Official Page” has information relating to Young Adult Ministries and outreach. Online location: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=140892400079> accessed 1 February 2011
- Example of young adult ministry community outreach. “Young Adults Spread Thanksgiving Spirit.” January 22, 2010. Church of God in Christ, Inc. Online location: <http://cogic.net/cogiccms/cogic-youth-department/tag/west-angeles-young-adult-ministry/> accessed 15 January 2011
- Have young adults help create youth ministry. Here are some guidelines: Mwaura, Maina. “Youth Ministry in the African American Church.” AME Christian Education Department. Nashville, TN. Online location: <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CBgQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ameced.com%2FyoungAdultResources.pdf&ei=tux8TcSvLlEXOqvKuJwH&usq=AFQjCNHf1Mzmec0hOo3BiOqZu1mQpKVOTA&sig2=6DNGHB4CvuTw-P38KTs80w> accessed 15 January 2011
- Here is another outreach suggestion: “Barbershop Ministry Offers More Than Haircuts.” General Assembly Mission Council. Presbyterian Churches of America. February 3, 2010. Online location: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/africanamerican/barbershop-ministry-offers-more-haircuts/> accessed 15 January 2011
- Besides finding that church activities boost academic achievements in black communities, this academic article discusses and supports creating mentoring systems using young African American adults. Irvin, Matthew J., Thomas W. Farmer, Man-Chi Leung, Jana H. Thompson, and Bryan C. Hutchins. “School, Community, and Church Activities: Relationship to Academic Achievement of Low-Income African American Early Adolescents in the Rural Deep South.” University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Journal of Research in Rural Education. 25:4 2010. Online location: <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CCIQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.jrre.psu.edu%2Farticles%2F25-4.pdf&ei=uPF8Td3PNIagOsBL-f0G&usq=AFQjCNEzJuWd- -9AVVNC9agqnjoz1IEGg&sig2=8htZcyDQCHneN7gitmxg4A> accessed 13 January 2011

View These Links for Vibrant Young Adult Ministries

- West Angeles Church of God in Christ, Los Angeles, CA. Online location: http://www.westa.org/ministry_yam.html accessed 15 January 2011
- Emmanuel Brinklow Seventh-day Adventist Church, Brinklow, MD. Online location: <http://www.emmanueladventist.org/article.php?id=77> accessed 15 January 2011
- Covent Avenue Baptist Church, Harlem, NY: Online location: <http://www.conventchurch.org/youngadults.php> accessed 13 January 2011

- The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York, Jamaica, NY. Online location: <http://www.allencathedral.org/yam/yam.html> accessed 13 January 2011

XII. Notes for Selected Songs

A. Hymn(s)

- Just as I Am. By Charlotte Elliott
Location:
Crispell, Tunesha. Just as I Am. North Carolina: Potbelly Music Productions, 2008.
- There Is a Fountain. By William Cowper
Location:
McClendon, Clarence E. Shout Hallelujah. New York, NY: Sony, 2000.

B. Well Known Song(s)

- My Name Is Victory. By Jonathan Nelson and Justin Savage
Location:
Nelson, Jonathan. Right Now Praise. Mobile, AL: Integrity, 2008.
- The Winner in Me. By Michael Clemmons, Kerry A. Smith, and Arthur Strong
Location:
Coko. The Winner in Me. Nashville, TN: Light Records, 2009.

C. Modern Songs (Written between 2000 and 2010)

- Destiny. By Stephen Hurd
Location:
My Destiny. Mobile, AL: Integrity Media, 2006.
- I Can Only Imagine. By Bart Millard
Location:
Mercy Me. Almost There. Nashville, TN: INO Records, 2001.
- Lead Me Jesus (Remix). By Gregory O'Quin
Location:
Various Artists and Greg O'Quin & iPraise. Rejoice in the Spirit. New York, NY: Universal Music Group, 2009.
- Great Expectations. By JJ Hairston
Location:
Youthful Praise. Resting on His Promise. Nashville, TN: Light Records, 2009.

D. Invitational Song(s)

- I Need You Now. By Smokie Norful
Location:
I Need You Now. Brentwood TN: EMI Gospel, 2002.
- More Abundantly. By Ricky Dillard
Location:
Promise. Muscle Shoals, AL: Muscle Shoals, 1991.

Notes

1. McCray, Walter Arthur. Black Young Adults: How to Reach Them, What to Teach Them. Chicago, IL: Black Light Fellowship, 1992. p. 4.
2. Ibid., pp. 4–5.
3. Ibid., p. 18.
4. Hill, Paul. “Passages: Birth, Initiation, Marriage and Death.” The National Rites of Passage Institute. p. 15 Online location: <http://www.ritesofpassage.org/index.htm> (click link titled: Click here to read Paul Hill’s chapter on Rites of Passage in Jacob U. Gordon’s book: The African Presence in Black America.) accessed 19 February 2009
5. Ibid.
6. O’Neil, Dennis. “Rites of Passage.” Behavioral Sciences Department, Palomar College, San Marcos, California. Online location: http://anthro.palomar.edu/social/soc_4.htm accessed 19 February 2009
7. Hill, Paul. “Passages: Birth, Initiation, Marriage and Death.” p. 4.
8. See Berlin, Adele, Marc Brettle, and Michael Fishburn. The Jewish Study Bible: Featuring the Jewish Publication Society TANAKH translation. New York, NY: Oxford, 2004; Walter Brueggemann’s The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections, in The New Interpreter’s Bible. Leander Keck, Editor. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994; and Coggin, Richard. The Book of Exodus. Epworth Commentaries. Peterborough, England: Epworth, 2000.