



Emancipation Proclamation Day and Juneteenth

Friday, January 1, 2011

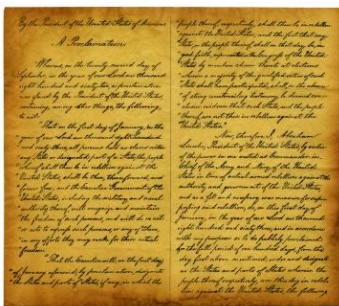
Guest Writer for this Unit: Mark Jefferson. Mark is a first-year PhD student at Emory University in Atlanta, GA.

The unit you are viewing, Emancipation Proclamation Day and Juneteenth, 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 Emancipation Proclamation Day and Juneteenth 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

Since the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth share important historical and cultural connections, we explore them under the same lectionary moment. Some congregations will choose to celebrate each of these moments separately on different days. Others will elect to celebrate only one of these moments. Still other churches will combine the celebrations as we have done and celebrate them on January 1st or June 19th.

In the African American Lectionary 2010 Emancipation Proclamation Day commentary, Dr. Luke Powery wrote the following concerning the theological implications of designating a day Emancipation Proclamation Day:



To designate a day “Emancipation Proclamation” implies that God is a God of emancipation, freedom, and liberation. It suggests that God is on the side of freedom and resists oppression. This is surely true for the black church’s traditional understanding of God as a God who is on the side of the oppressed. The God of black people is a freeing God. By making this distinction (i.e., God of black people), I am suggesting that there may be other gods, even supposedly “Christian gods,” at work in the world; other gods whom

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people worship, other gods whom people think are God. But, if these gods are oppressive and destructive, they are not the God of the oppressed, the God of African Americans, the God of our weary years and silent tears, the One who has brought us thus far along the way. This identity of God as a deliverer of the oppressed is critical for this Sunday and is a lens through which one can worship in celebration with trust in his or her heart.

In the African American Lectionary 2009 Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth cultural resource unit, Dr. Juan Floyd-Thomas wrote the following about the history of Juneteenth:

What is Juneteenth?

June 19th is perhaps the oldest holiday celebrated by African Americans; it is the grandfather of all such observances. Juneteenth is a cultural observance. June 19, 1865 marks the date that *all* slaves in the United States were officially made “free.”

Who developed Juneteenth?

Freed slaves in the state of Texas created and developed the June 19th celebration in 1866. Legend has it that the name Juneteenth was derived from a little Negro girl who could not pronounce “June 19.” She said “Juneteenth” and the name caught on and was used throughout the state of the Texas.

When is Juneteenth observed?

Juneteenth is officially observed on June 19; however, the celebration may last one to seven days. On this Lectionary, it is slated for celebration for January 1 and has been joined with Emancipation Proclamation Day for two reasons. First, the Emancipation Proclamation was given effect on **January 1, 1863**. Second, during the earliest Juneteenth celebrations the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation took center stage. Our goal is to give historical coverage to both events, understanding that Juneteenth is now almost always celebrated in June.

Where is Juneteenth observed?

This American holiday is celebrated primarily by African Americans and was originally celebrated by freed slaves located in the state of Texas. Juneteenth is now celebrated by many throughout the world.

Why is Juneteenth observed?

Juneteenth is observed to acknowledge that *all* slaves within the continental United States were freed at a certain point. This celebration acknowledged the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation while also acknowledging that the slaves of the state of Texas did not receive the news until almost 2½ years after the official signing and announcement was given. Large celebrations began in 1866.

African Americans in the state of Texas treat this day like the Fourth of July and the celebrations contain similar events. In the 1800s, the celebrations included a deeply religious tone: prayer service, speakers with inspirational messages, and preaching, after which the **reading of the Emancipation Proclamation was followed by stories from former slaves**. Barbeque, red soda water, desserts, and watermelon were served and

enjoyed by all. Various games were played while rodeos and dances became serious contests for participants and the crowds alike.

With this background material in mind, we now turn to the sermon outline.

II. Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth: Sermonic Outline

A. Sermonic Focus Text(s): Isaiah 61:1-11 and 2 Corinthians 3:17 (New Revised Standard Version)

Isaiah 61:1-11

(v. 1) The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; (v. 2) to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; (v. 3) to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. (v. 4) They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. (v. 5) Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines; (v. 6) but you shall be called priests of the LORD, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. (v. 7) Because their shame was double, and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs. (v. 8) For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. (v. 9) Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. (v. 10) I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (v. 11) For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

B. Possible Titles

- i. Reversals
- ii. Fully Free
- iii. The Other Side of Freedom

C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry

In any text there can be several significant points of exegetical inquiry. Given that the day on the calendar is Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth, I believe that the point in the text that deserves special exegetical inquiry is Isaiah 61:5:

(v. 5) Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines;

Strangers—the Hebrew word *zuwr* means *to be a stranger* or *to be strange*. This differs from the word *foreigners* in the text. The word for foreigners in the text—*ben*—refers to a people of a nation. This exegetical inquiry helped to make clear to me how God enlists people who are different from the Israelites and people of a different nation altogether to bless Israel.

III. Introduction

Forty acres and a mule was supposed to be the resources granted to every slave to help them transition from slave to free person. We realize that our ancestors did not get their forty acres and a mule but were mainly the recipients of one empty promise after another. However, there were those who knew that freedom for slaves must be supported by resources, because any group that had had most basic resources withheld needed help making the adjustment to full citizenship, and all rights and privileges attendant thereto.

We, as Christians, also understand what it means to be bound (to be constrained in different ways). Just as was the case with those who enslaved our foreparents, many of us were/are bound by pride, power, anger, greed, cold and unfeeling hearts, etcetera. God can set us free from all shackles, and we see God as an emancipator and one who gives reparations in Isaiah 61.

IV. Moves/Points

Move/Point One: God reverses situations

The first thing to realize if we are bound is that God specializes in reversals. Verses 1–4 speak of how God reversed the situations of those who mourned in Zion. God reversed:

- a. their physical situation (vv. 1 and 2);
- b. their emotional situation (v. 3); and
- c. their past failures and future expectations (v. 4).

Move/Point Two: God sent others to help with the reversal

Not only did God reverse their situation, but God also recruited people to help them; just as God did for our foreparents. There were benevolent people of other races who assisted

our ancestors in their ascent to freedom. This included everything from teaching people to read to helping them build schools, newspapers, and churches.

- a. Strangers will sustain what sustains you (v. 5a);
- b. Foreigners will do the hard work that you used to do (v. 5b); and
- c. Your blessings are the result of God bringing people different than you to help you.

Move/Point Three: God renamed them for God’s glory

God not only reversed their situation and recruited people to help them, but God also renamed them for God’s glory. In slavery, the names given to our ancestors were intended to mentally lock them into an inferior posture, devalue who they were, and limit their aspirations. But, as in the text, God renames God’s people for God’s glory and for their future. They were renamed according to:

- a. Their relationship to God (v. 6);
- b. What they would receive from God (v. 7); and
- c. What God clothed them with (v. 10).

V. Celebration

An old song, “His Eye Is on the Sparrow,” says, “I sing because I’m happy, I sing because I’m free; For His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me!” So, I embrace my freedom. I sing because I’m happy. I sing because I’m free!

VI. Illustration(s)

Walking to Freedom

2 Corinthians 3:17 says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Many of us don’t recognize our freedom even when we stare it in the face. There was a man who was captured by an enemy army. They placed him in a dungeon with little light and little food. They would always open his cell and feed him. And then the feeding stopped. And every day he prayed that God would make a way for him to escape. After many weeks, he gave up hope. Just then, the war ended and troops came to rescue him. They asked, “Why are you still sitting in here?” He said, “I am prisoner; they locked me in here a long time ago.” A soldier said, “You must not have tried to open the gate because the lock on this gate is broken. You could have just walked to freedom.”

See the Sermon Illustration section of the African American Lectionary for additional illustrations that you may wish to use in presenting this sermon.

VII. Songs to Accompany This Sermon

A. Hymn(s)

- O God, Our Help in Ages Past. By Isaac Watts. Arr. by William Croft. Tune, (ST. ANNE).

This hymn originated in the 18th century and is based on Psalm 90. It reminds the church of “help” in the past, “shelter” in the present, and our “hope” for the future. Given this text, this song can be used as an opening hymn.

B. Well-known Song(s)

- Don’t You Let Nobody Turn You ‘Round. Arr. by Lena I. McLin

This song can be used during the Period of Prayer. Its message tells hearers to keep fighting because there are still injustices that need to be overcome.

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

- I’m Coming Out. Sung by Dorinda Clark-Cole

This song can be used at any point in the worship service as an assertion by worshippers that they are claiming their ability to overcome anything that has them bound.

- For Every Mountain. Sung by Curt Karr and the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qO2JPnxPmFg> accessed 5 December 2010.

This song can be used at any point in the worship service except as the sermonic hymn or the invitational hymn. It encourages believers to praise God or give thanks for everything, including the mountains we encounter.

D. Invitational Song(s)

- We Shall Overcome. Text adapted by Zilpha Horton, Frank Hamilton, Guy Carawan, and Pete Seeger. Tune, (WE SHALL OVERCOME).

This song affirms what ought to be the resolve of all black Christians, is apt for Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth, and sums up the main point of the sermon—that with God, Christians shall overcome as they continue to battle for the Kingdom. This song is also selected as the Invitational Song because it beckons the unsaved to come forth and overcome by accepting Christ and beckons believers to be resolved to **do** the work of God instead of just talk about it.

VIII. Videos, Audio, and or Interactive Media

- “Lincoln’s Proclamation.” National Geographic. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akfQ7TfAQVY> accessed 5 December 2010
- Bailey, Jim. Dir. Juneteenth—A Celebration of Freedom (Trailer). Texas Institute for the Preservation of History and Culture. Contact Information: <http://www.pvamu.edu/pages/5069.asp>
Online location for videos:
Part I: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkI5ricZGLQ&feature=channel>

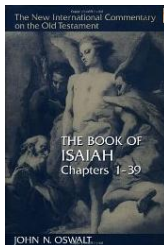
Part II: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFDUIu5ri-Y&feature=channel>

Part III: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qJ96ZIV0qk&feature=channel>
accessed 5 December 2010

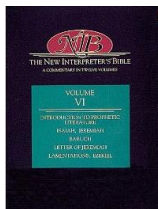
- “This Far by Faith.” See the outline of this 6-part documentary. Online location: http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/about/the_series.html accessed 5 December 2010
- The Slave Experience: Personal narratives from former slaves about religion. Audio and text. *Slavery and the Making of America*. PBS. Online location: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/religion/narratives.html> accessed 5 December 2010
- “Isaiah 61—AIS Hope Academy Drakenstein Prison, Cape Town, South Africa.” Theme of renewal, restoration and rebuilding youth with soccer/sport. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cvWR5guYc0> accessed 5 December 2010
- Interactive: “The Underground Railroad.” *National Geographic*. Online location: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad/index.html> accessed 5 December 2010

IX. Books, Commentaries, and Articles and to Assist in Preparing Sermons or Bible Studies

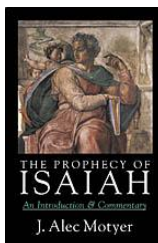
A. Books



- Oswalt, John. *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39: New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998. John Oswalt’s commentaries on Isaiah are a companion to Motyer’s.



- Keck, Leander E. et. al. *The New Interpreter’s Bible: Isaiah–Ezekiel (Volume 6)*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001.



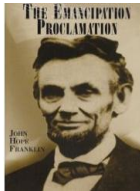
- Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*. Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998. This stand-alone volume is clearly written from an evangelical perspective and semi-technical, so those who are not trained in the biblical languages may find some sections more difficult than others. Motyer has also contributed the volume on [Isaiah](#) to the Tyndale series. This smaller volume is not simply a summary of the **Emancipation Proclamation Day and Juneteenth**

larger work. It contains many helpful insights not found in the larger work.

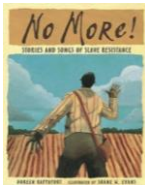
B. Articles

- “A Story of Loss and Hope.” A Commentary on Isaiah. Brueggemann, Walter. Sojourners Magazine 27.6 (Nov–Dec 1998):44-48. Online location: <https://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&mode=author&authorid=362&issue=soj9811&article=981149> accessed 5 December 2010

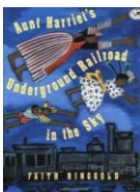
C. Books and Writings Concerning Emancipation Proclamation Day and Juneteenth



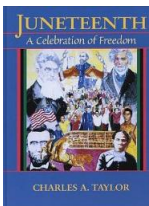
- Franklin, John Hope. The Emancipation Proclamation. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, (1963) reprint edition, Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1995.



- Rappaport, Doreen. No More!: Stories and Songs of Slave Resistance. Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 2006. Online location: <http://www.doreenrappaport.com/learn.html>; and <http://www.cokesbury.com/forms/ProductDetail.aspx?pid=864525> accessed 5 December 2010

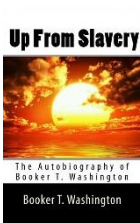


- Ringgold, Faith. Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky. New York, NY: Crown Pub. Inc., 1992. Online location: <http://www.faithringgold.com/ringgold/book02.htm> accessed 5 December 2010



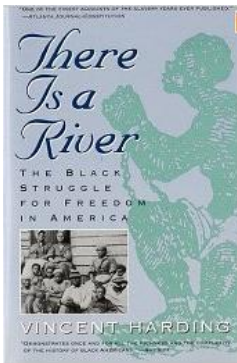
- Taylor, Charles. Juneteenth: a Celebration. Greensboro, NC: Open Hand Publishing, 2002. See excerpt. Online location:

<http://www.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=E1JWjKxEidgC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=juneteenth&ots=1qM84LM03A&sig=H2P2VybADf7sW2y6bWqUDO0qjXY#> accessed 5 December 2010



- Washington, Booker T. Up From Slavery: The Autobiography of Booker T. Washington. 1901. Now in public domain and available [Emancipation Proclamation Day and Juneteenth](#)

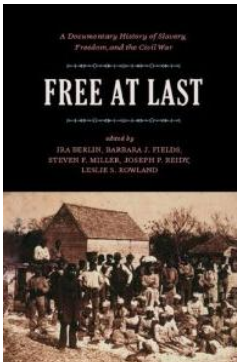
free at: Project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2376>; Student Handouts.com, www.studenthandouts.com/upfromslavery.pdf ; Lit2Go <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/contents/4800/4880/4880.html> accessed 5 December 2010



- Harding, Vincent. There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1981. This resource explores the “self-emancipation thesis”: Lincoln did not free the slaves, asserts Harding; they freed themselves by escaping from their masters to Union lines. They came in such numbers as to undermine slavery and ultimately to destroy it by throwing their weight on the side of the Union as laborers and soldiers. “While Lincoln continued to hesitate about the legal, constitutional, moral, and military aspects of the matter,” wrote Harding, “the

relentless movement of the self-liberated fugitives into the Union lines... took the freedom into their own hands.”

Barbara Fields gave wide publicity to the self-emancipation thesis. On camera in the PBS television documentary “The Civil War” and in an essay published in the volume accompanying the series, she declared that “freedom did not come to the slaves from words on paper, either the words of Congress or those of the President,” but “from the initiative of the slaves.”



- Berlin, Ira, and Barbara J. Fields, et. al. Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War. Online location: <http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/falpg.htm> accessed 5 December 2010

- “Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and Its Meaning in American Life.” Berlin, Ira. Maryland. Online location: www.library.vanderbilt.edu/Quaderno/Quaderno5/Q5.C3.Berlin.pdf accessed 5 December 2010. (“From the first guns at Fort Sumter, the strongest advocates of emancipation were the slaves themselves.”)
- Check your local library for a selection of books for all ages. For suggestions, go to: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/resources/kids.html> accessed 5 December 2010

X. Links to Helpful Websites for Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth

- The “Emancipation Proclamation.” National Archives & Records Administration. Online location: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/
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accessed 5 December 2010

- “Ex-Slave Narratives.” C-Span. Audio interviews of former slaves. Online location: <http://www.c-span.org/antietam/narratives.asp> accessed 5 December 2010
- Juneteenth World Wide.Com. Information on the location of Juneteenth celebrations and its history. Online location: <http://www.juneteenth.com/> accessed 5 December 2010
- The “Annual Juneteenth Jamboree” is a celebration of new works by African American playwrights about the African American experience. Juneteenth Legacy Theatre. Louisville, KY. Online location: <http://www.juneteenthlegacytheatre.com/index.html> accessed 5 December 2010
- Acosta, Teresa Palomo. “Juneteenth.” A short historical timeline of Juneteenth’s evolution. Handbook of Texas Online. Online location: <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/lkj01> accessed 5 December 2010
- The Slave Experience: Religion. PBS has many sources of information which can inspire discussion and sermons for all ages and all levels of education. Click on the links. Online location: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/religion/index.html> accessed 5 December 2010