

Order of Worship for August 9, 2020
Profiles in Faith: Mary McLeod Bethune

COUNTDOWN

OPENING VERSE

Jennifer Leslie
Psalm 25:4-5 (CEB)

Make your ways known to me, Lord; teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth - teach it to me - because you are the God who saves me.
I put my hope in you all day long.

PRELUDE

Glorify Thy Name
arr. by Mark Hayes
Diane Gronewold on Piano

GREETING

Rachael

OPENING PRAYER

God of the Ages, we praise you in a chorus with all those people of faith who have come before us. We praise you with all those around the world who pray to you right now. And we praise you with the generations to come. May your people everywhere praise your holy name, and may we be inspired to love and serve you wherever we are. Amen.

HYMN

Beautiful Savior (Hymn Arrangement by Brian Schroeder)

Beautiful Savior, King of creation
Son of God and Son of man
Truly I'd love thee, truly I'd serve thee
light of my soul, my joy, my crown

Fair are the meadows, fair are the
woodlands
robed in the flow'rs of blooming spring
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer
he makes the woeful heart to sing

Fair is the sunshine, fair is the moonlight
bright the sparkling stars on high
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
than all the angels in the sky

Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations
son of God and son of man
Glory and honor, praise, adoration
now and forevermore be thine

OFFERING and PRAYER

****General Fund, Good Samaritan Fund, Building Fund****

OFFERTORY

VIDEO: Mary McLeod Bethune

Rachael and Harris will create this

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:46-55 (CEB)

Mary said,

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name.

He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”

VIDEO: A UMCA teacher -Jennifer Leslie

SERMON

Rachael

Profiles in Faith: Mary McLeod Bethune

I’m going to be vulnerable with you for a minute.

As this year goes on...and on...and on...

There are many days when I wake up already feeling defeated...

It’s pretty easy to feel hopeless, helpless,

Even frozen by competing information, uncertainty, needs, and expectations.

Can anyone out there relate?

One of the places I’ve found motivation to keep going has been in the stories of inspiring people who, with faith in God at their center, pressed on in difficult (sometimes impossible) circumstances and made a real difference in the world. These stories help me to get outside of

myself, to shake off the desire to complain about all the things that aren't the way I think they should be, and to imagine the ways God is calling me to get up, get to work, and keep going.

And, as it turns out, a lot of the most inspiring stories I've ever heard are about regular people - not people with extreme wealth or power - regular people with the kinds of skills we talked about earlier in the pandemic: patience, humility, compassion, forgiveness, prayer, perseverance, and justice. Regular people whose trust in God radiated throughout all aspects of their lives. People whose legacies help me believe that all of us can make a difference in the world.

Welcome to our new series: Profiles in Faith.

This morning you heard not one, but three inspiring stories!

Our scripture reading was probably familiar to you, though we don't usually read it this time of year! The first couple of chapters in Luke's gospel tell of the birth of Jesus, a set of readings we reserve for the early winter as Christmas approaches. But tell me this: do we need Jesus now?

You bet we do. In trying times, what could be more inspiring than to return to the story of Jesus coming to earth, in the flesh. Jesus, of course, was not a regular person, but do you know who was? His mother, Mary. In fact, she was extra regular. A humble young woman, no wealth or status to speak of. So how did she become one of the most inspiring and memorable people the world has ever known? She said yes, she didn't quit - from the time of her pregnancy to the day her child was publicly executed and beyond.

Mary could have responded by complaining to her cousin Elizabeth. This was not the life she had expected. This was not the way things were done in her time or in her community. She was young, pregnant, probably had heartburn and backaches. This was not happening at a convenient time for her. She probably wondered if her life would ever go back to normal (spoiler alert: it wouldn't). Still, Mary chooses to sing praises to God. She chooses to use whatever life she has and whatever circumstances she's in to magnify God's name. She proclaims the mission of God, in the legacy of the Hebrew prophets, to overturn systems of power and oppression, to feed the hungry and to set the world on a new trajectory toward God's kingdom.

This is significant as we watch profiles of people of faith who have made a difference in the world because Mary sets the stage for what happens when Jesus shows up. When Jesus shows up, every time, in the past and present and future, the world turns upside down. The forgotten are remembered, the wanderers are welcomed home, the disempowered are invited to live in the fullness of their strength.

This could also describe the life of Mary McLeod Bethune, who dedicated her life to the teaching and empowerment of young people, especially black girls in a time when her commitment to equity in education was groundbreaking. Beyond that, over the course of her life she was a daughter and sister, wife and mother, entrepreneur, educator, philanthropist, advocate,

stateswoman, and more. When her life began in 1875, she was the first child in her family to be born into freedom, as her parents were former slaves. Her lasting legacy in education is not only the physical Bethune-Cookman College, a historically black university in South Carolina, but also the ways in which her school and leadership set the gold standard for black colleges even today.

And Mary McLeod Bethune was a Methodist! She is one of the many regular people whose life and work is part of the foundation upon which we stand as Methodists today. The extraordinary story of her life, which the video earlier described in more detail, is extraordinary because of what she did with her precious time here on earth. She lived in God's kingdom right from the start. Her faith was not only what helped her to survive in difficult times, but also what inspired and motivated her to give all of herself to what others would've deemed impossible.

Mary McLeod Bethune was called to live out her faith by investing in education. She believed that every child had the potential to become a world-changer. She said, "We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends." Did you catch that? She believed in the inherent value of young people enough to be willing to change even her own ideas and practices. And she advocated at every level for systems in education that would be equitable for the children who otherwise were ignored and left behind, specifically girls and black children.

You also heard a small piece of Jennifer's story today, a story about a lifelong desire to teach. A calling on her life from the very beginning to invest her energy, resources, training, and passion into the lives of young people. She shared how her faith gave her all the principles and values that she needed to be a great teacher, one whose impact on so many students over the years has undoubtedly made a difference in the world.

The story she shared about her students Tony and William also echoes Mary's song from Luke 1, doesn't it? It was with these students, who had been through so much, whose past trauma made them difficult to teach, that Jennifer found one of the most rewarding memories of her career.

Mary's song before Jesus' birth calls forth a time when the hungry will be filled and the rich will go away empty, an overturning of power. Jennifer's story adds a new dimension to the song, for we who have lived in relative comfort. With her faith in Christ guiding her work, Jennifer discovered that when God's kingdom turns us upside down it doesn't have to leave anyone empty. Because she embraced the opportunity to serve others, emptying herself, she also walked away filled - not only in the immediate but in a way that would satisfy her throughout her life.

Mary McLeod Bethune's life, I hope, inspires us as people of faith to press on in following Jesus and to press on in loving our neighbors and to press on in pursuit of God's kingdom. In

Bethune's words, "Faith is the first factor in a life devoted to service. Without it, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible."

I hope this week you'll find some time to explore more of Mary McLeod Bethune's story. And may you be blessed in these reminders that God is calling each one of us, wherever we are, to serve one another and work for God's kingdom of equity, justice, and peace.

Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

River in Judea (recorded by UMCA Chancel Choir in 1993) (Come Build...Track 11)
©1989 Words: Linda Marcus; Music: Jack Feldman; Arr. John Leavitt

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN

Sent Out in Jesus' Name

Sent out in Jesus' name, our hands are ready now
to make the world the place in which the kingdom comes.

The angels cannot change a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love, of justice, and of peace.

The task is ours to do to set it really free.

O help us to obey and carry out your will!

BENEDICTION

from the Last Will and Testament of Mary McLeod Bethune:

I leave you love.

I leave you hope.

I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another.

I leave you a thirst for education.

I leave you a respect for the use of power.

I leave you faith.

I leave you racial dignity.

I leave you a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow men.

I leave you a responsibility to our young people.

Come out Wednesday evening @ 6:30pm for drive in worship!

POSTLUDE

