

God is on Earth in His Full Glory
Black History Month – Sermon February 23, 2020

The words we speak make the world. The voices which we listen to shape our imagination. The songs we sing confirm what we will believe. In poetry and song, we are telling our stories. If you want to know who someone is, listen to their stories.

Each year, during the month of February, North Americans set aside a few weeks to focus their historical hindsight on the contributions that people of African descent have made to our countries.

The History of Black History Month

Black History Month originally began as Negro History Week in 1926. It took place during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. In 1976, President Gerald Ford expanded the week into a full month, calling on all Americans to “seize the opportunity to honour the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavour throughout our history.”

In honor of Black History Month, today here in our Calvin family, we are celebrating our dark skinned sisters and brothers for whom we are proud to call not only members of Calvin, but also our sisters and brothers.

Why do we celebrate Black History Month?

We celebrate to have a better understanding of our shared history and to recognize the pains, progress, and accomplishments of the black community. We celebrate to honour the contributions made by black men and women. Celebrating Black History Month honours the historic leaders of the black community, and the sacrifice and suffering they endured to secure the rights and freedoms we enjoy in the present. We are encouraging our young generation to make all effort to grow in faith and knowledge, to dream dreams and to work hard to reach their dreams. Celebrating reminds us that we are ONE here in Canada and here in Calvin family, and we pray and work together for a better future.

Also, we celebrate Black History month to listen and to focus to the stories of black history. History does not change, but the viewer changes. Storytelling is the inheritance of every human being. As we share our stories we remind ourselves of who we are. It is how we teach our heritage and share our values. Stories enable us to reflect deeply about our lives by helping us remember what has been, and imagine what might be. The stories of our lives are what most characterizes our identity. In other words, the stories we consistently tell ourselves and others form the answers

to “Who am I” and “How do I fit into the world around me?” We are the stories we tell.

We, as a Christian community, are stronger, and we feel differently for each other as we know and share our stories. Your story and my story are the stories of a beloved community whose lives have been written by God, edited by Jesus, and transformed by the Holy Spirit. As we celebrate the stories of our beloved, and retell our Christian journey to the cross, may our lives be transformed, transfigured, and changed by being touched by their experiences.

In the next few minutes, I will share with you a few quotes from black men and women, who poured out their hearts, faith and minds through their stories and experiences. I am asking you to pause with me, and give time to yourself to think about these quotes, and try to implement the messages in your heart. May God, who transformed Jesus on the mountain in the presence of His disciples, transform our lives today, so we might shine as Christians, as God’s children in this world. May we be known by our love.

Quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- “The time is always right to do what is right.”
- “We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers. Our abundance has brought us neither peace of mind nor serenity of spirit.”
- “Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better.”
- “If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps life moving, you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you to go on in spite of all. And so today I still have a dream.”
- “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Quotes from Maya Angelou

- “Won’t it be wonderful when black history and Native American history and Jewish history and all of U.S. history is taught from one book. Just U.S. history.”
- “Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope.”
- “Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave, I am the dream and the hope of the slave. I rise. I rise. I rise.”

Quote from George Washington Carver:

- “Where there is no vision, there is no hope.”

Quote from Barack Obama:

- “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

Quote from Michelle Obama:

- “One of the lessons that I grew up with was to always stay true to yourself and never let what somebody else says distract you from your goals. And so when I hear about negative and false attacks, I really don’t invest any energy in them, because I know who I am.”

Quote from Mary McLeod Bethune

- “For I am my mother’s daughter, and the drums of Africa still beat in my heart.”

Quote from Harriet Tubman

- “Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

Quote from Ola Joseph

- “Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another’s uniqueness.” – Ola Joseph

Quote from Portia White, a famous Nova Scotian singer, born in 1911

"Follow your Dreams and if they don't turn out right, try again."

The first ordained black woman minister in Canada was the Rev. Addie Aylestock, who served British Methodist Episcopal churches for over twenty years. She was born in Glenallen, Ont. but ministered in Toronto, Halifax and Owen Sound. Addie, being especially devout, resolved to become a missionary and work in Liberia, on the west coast of Africa. In order to qualify for service overseas, she studied at the Toronto Bible College and became a deaconess in 1944. Reverend Addie Aylestock went on to head British Methodist Episcopal churches in Fort Erie, Guelph, Niagara Falls, North Buxton, and St. Catharines, Ontario, as well as in Montreal, Quebec, and Halifax, Nova Scotia. From 1958-1982, she served as the general secretary of the British Methodist Episcopal Conference.

And now let us listen to a young man, who might be the youngest preacher you ever heard, and please take all his words in your heart.

(See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R9lwRqyf1s>)