

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 27, 2020

Whole Truth, Total Praise

by Garland F. Pierce

Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16

78:1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,

78:3 things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us.

78:4 We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

78:12 In the sight of their ancestors he worked marvels in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.

78:13 He divided the sea and let them pass through it, and made the waters stand like a heap.

78:14 In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all night long with a fiery light.

78:15 He split rocks open in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep.

78:16 He made streams come out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers.

It is a blessing that this psalm appears in the lectionary during September, which traditionally in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and others has been designated as Christian Education Month. The writer of this teaching psalm commits to teaching future generations about the saving acts and glorious deeds of God. The lectionary reading omits some harsher, even some would say, more problematic stanzas of Psalm 78. The teaching psalmist does not only commit to teaching future generations about

God's great deeds but also "dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us." The psalmist commits to tell the children the good, the bad, and the ugly—the whole story, the whole truth. The psalmist will tell of Israel's failings and rebellious nature as well as the resulting consequences. For the psalmist, a sanitized truth or a revisionist history does a disservice to the generations to come and ultimately does not give the fullest picture of God's acts. If one does not tell the story of strife, how can one expect others to truly celebrate God's power to bring about unity. If one does not tell the story of slavery and bondage, how can one expect others to truly celebrate God's power to set free. Our sensibilities might be offended by and our theology might differ from that of the psalmist's description of the violent and angry acts of God. One purpose for teaching the whole truth is so the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

Right now in the USA, it's president wants to demand that a white-washed form of US history be taught in the schools to raise up his particular brand of "patriotism." He rails against the 1619 Project. The 1619 project "aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of [the United States'] national narrative." (The New York Times Magazine) In his mind, these stories do not matter which would lead one to conclude that for him, these lives and others like them did not and do not matter. We must tell the whole truth.

We are thankful to Dr. Dennis C. Dickerson, retired general officer, for his new comprehensive history of the AME Church, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A History*. In this volume, generations to come can learn in a level of detail rarely matched about the rich legacy of this church of God. As we tell the stories of Richard Allen, Jarena Lee, Henry McNeil Turner, Charlotte Maxeke, Mangena M. Mokone, H. M. Steady, Vashti McKenzie, and others, we must tell the sad stories of Emmett Till, Steve Biko, the Mother Emanuel Nine, Sandra Bland, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake, and countless others.

Another purpose for teaching the whole truth is so all can see just how miraculously God can and does move. When we see how God can take messes and make miracles and make ways through sea and dessert and have bread fall from heaven and make refreshing water spring up from rocks and the hard places in our lives, then we can give God total praise—praise for being a way-maker, a guide, a provider, our loving and liberating God. Like the psalmist, let us commit to teach the whole story so that we can give God total praise for generations to come.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—During this pandemic and from our personal, family, and church histories, what is the good, bad, and ugly that we need to share with future generations? What are some healthy and helpful ways to share the whole truth?

PRAY:

Almighty God, We praise you because you have saved your people throughout the ages and protected them in ways which can never be fully understood. Give us the courage to face issues of good and evil within our world with the strength and courage only You can give, and so contribute to Your work for love, justice, and peace in the world. Teach us how to teach those to come the whole truth. Guide us on our journey toward freedom and a closer relationship with you. We pray in the name of the Bread of Heaven, our spring of Living Water, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Jesus. AMEN

Adapted from: <http://www.netdevotions.org/BExodus%2015,1-12.pdf>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, start to think through and make a plan as to how you will help those who shall come behind us understand what it was like to live through these tumultuous times of 2020. *Write down/record **the whole truth** and your psalms of praise that you can share with those who follow or identify psalms which you can repeat to yourself and others throughout this pandemic!* For those US citizens, here are some practical actions to take: Participate in the current democratic processes (voter registration, voting, completing the 2020 census (**CENSUS DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**) and encouraging others to do so—See: <http://www.amev-alert.org> and <https://2020census.gov>.) For everyone, practice social distancing as much as possible, wash your hands often, and wear face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amehealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
AMEC Hymnal, #53

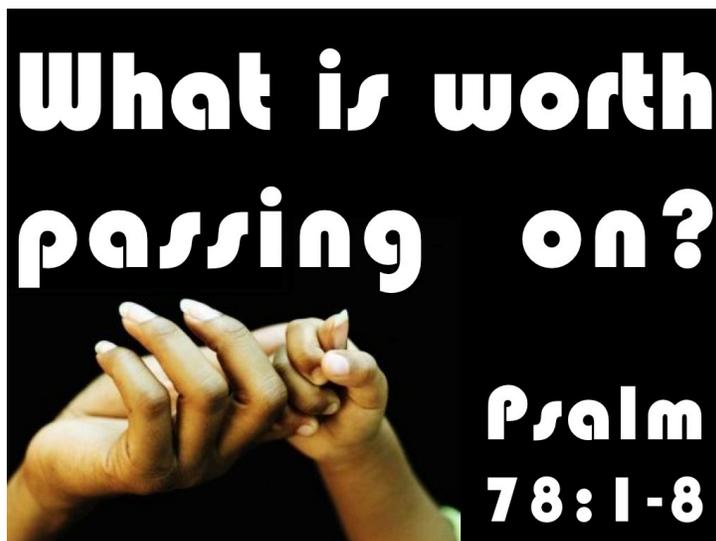
1. Guide me, O Thou great Je-ho-vah,
Pil-grim through this bar-ren land;
I am weak, but Thou art might-y,
Hold me with Thy power-ful hand;
Bread of heav-en, Feed me till I want no more;
Bread of heav-en, Feed me till I want no more.
2. O-pen now the crys-tal foun-tain,
Whence the heal-ing wa-ters flow;

- Let the fire and cloud-y pil-lar
Lead me all my jour-ney through;
Strong De-liv-erer, Be Thou still my strength and shield;
Strong De-liv-erer, Be Thou still my strength and shield.
3. When I tread the verge of Jor-dan,
Bid my anx-ious fears sub-side;
Bear me through the swell-ing cur-rent,
Land me safe on Ca-naan's side;
Songs of prais-es I will ev-er give to Thee;
Songs of prais-es I will ev-er give to Thee. A-men.

Alternative Version: *Ndikhokele, O Jehovah* (AMEC Hymnal, #65).
@hushmalegroup: <https://youtu.be/0rZDrLIWQQ8>

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



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The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.