

MESSAGE:

**ATG 2019 ASH WEDNESDAY
SERVICE**

ST. MARGARET CHURCH

MARCH 6, 2019

BY

AMBASSADOR BYRON W. BLAKE

TODAY, ASH WEDNESDAY 2019, WE STAND AT THE START OF ANOTHER LENTEN PERIOD- RECALLING THE 40 DAYS JESUS SPENT IN THE WILDERNESS PREPARING FOR AND BEING TEMPTED BY SATAN. WE WILL RECEIVE OUR ASHES; WE WILL PREPARE TO FAST AND TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MANY SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES; AND MANY OF US WILL DECIDE TO ABSTAIN FROM SOMETHING. SOME OF US WILL ASSUME A PERSONA VERY DIFFERENT FROM OUR REAL SELF, THE SELF WE INHABIT THE OTHER 325 OR 326 DAYS OF THE YEAR.

WE DO WELL TO REFLECT AND ASK OURSELVES WHY WE REALLY DO THESE THINGS. AS WE REFLECT, LET US READ AGAIN A FEW OF THE VERSES READ EARLIER IN ISAIAH 58:

VERSE 2: ANNOUNCE TO MY PEOPLE THEIR REBELLION, TO THE HOUSE OF JACOB THEIR SINS.

VERSE 3: YET DAY AFTER DAY THEY SEEK ME AND DELIGHT TO KNOW MY WAYS,

VERSE 4: AS IF THEY WERE A NATION THAT PRACTICED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND DID NOT FORSAKE THE ORDINANCE OF THEIR GOD;

VERSE 6: “WHY DO WE FAST, BUT YOU DO NOT SEE? WHY HUMBLE OURSELVES, BUT YOU DO NOT NOTICE?”

THE ISRAELITES WERE DOING THE RITUALS BUT WERE NOT RECEIVING THE RESPONSES THEY EXPECTED OF GOD. INSTEAD OF SELF REFLECTION THEY ACCUSED GOD OF NOT SEEING. SO GOD SENT HIS MESSENGER, ISAIAH, TO EXPLAIN TO THEM WHY HE WAS NOT IMPRESSED, IN FACT, WHY HE WAS OFFENDED BY THEIR ACTIONS. GOD INSTRUCTED ISAIAH TO SHOUT OUT TO THE ISRAELITES AND NOT HOLD BACK THE TRUTH OF WHAT HE REQUIRED OF THEM. HE REQUIRED THEM TO LOOSE THE BONDS OF INJUSTICE, FREE THE OPPRESSED, FEED THE HUNGRY, PROVIDE SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS AND CLOTHES FOR THE NAKED.

WHEN THEY DO THESE THINGS; THINGS WHICH SOUND VERY MUCH LIKE OUR “MARKS OF MISSION”, THEIR LIGHT WILL SHINE, GOD WILL HEAR AND ANSWER THEIR CALL FOR HELP AND MOST IMPORTANTLY REMAIN PRESENT WITH THEM.

AS WE REFLECT TODAY CAN WE HEAR GOD SAYING TO HIS MESSENGER IN JAMAICA, THE CHURCH?

“ANNOUNCE TO THE PEOPLE OF JAMAICA THAT THEY ARE IN REBELLION AGAINST ME. THEY ARE KILLING WOMEN AND CHILDREN; THEY ARE KILLING EACH OTHER; THEY ARE ALLOWING INNOCENT BLOOD TO CONTAMINATE AND CRY OUT TO ME FROM THE PURE FRUITFUL EARTH I HAVE GIVEN THEM”

CAN WE HEAR GOD SAYING TO THE CHURCH IN JAMAICA?

“ANNOUNCE TO THE POLITICAL LEADERS, THE LEADERS OF BUSINESS AND OF YOUR SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND YOUR PROFESSIONALS YOU ARE IN REBELLION AGAINST ME? YOU ARE USING THE TALENTS AND POSITIONS I HAVE GIVEN YOU TO ENRICH YOURSELVES AND YOUR FAMILIES, TO STORE UP THAT WHICH YOU CANNOT USE AND TO OPPRESS, ROB, DECEIVE AND CORRUPT THE POOR SO THAT THEY BECOME POORER AND POORER AND THEREFORE MORE VULNERABLE OBJECTS FOR EXPLOITATION AND DERISION HERE AND IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.”

CAN WE HEAR GOD’S VOICE SAYING

“ANNOUNCE TO CHURCH LEADERS- CLERGY AND IN THE LAITY- THAT THEY ARE IN REBELLION AGAINST ME. THEY ARE NEITHER FEEDING NOR TENDING MY SHEEP. THEY ARE NOT SEARCHING FOR THE LOST. THEY ARE ABANDONING THE GOSPEL I GAVE THEM FOR PROSPERITY AND SELF ENRICHING, SELF PROMOTING AND SELF PRESERVING GOSPELS. THEY ARE EXPLOITING THE VULNERABILITIES AND INNOCENCE OF THE YOUNG, THE WIDOWS, AND THE UNEMPLOYED. THEY HAVE BECOME BED FELLOWS WITH THE RICH, AND POWERFUL. THEY COVER-UP AND KEEP SECRET

THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS; THEY HAVE ABANDONED THE SCHOOLS AND PLACES OF LEARNING I INSPIRED THEIR PREDECESSORS TO ESTABLISH AS FIELDS FOR TRUE RELIGIOUS FORMATION TO THE MACHINATIONS OF POLITICAL DEMI-GODS AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EXPLOITERS AND PREDATORS?

CAN WE HEAR THE VOICE SAYING TO HIS MESSENGER, THE CHURCH IN JAMAICA?

“ANNOUNCE TO THE POLITICAL AND BUSINESS LEADERS OF THE MAJOR NATIONS OF THE WORLD- THOSE THAT MEET IN, AND CONTROL THE SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF), THE WORLD BANK, THE G-20, DAVOS AND THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) – YOU ARE IN OPEN REBELLION AGAINST GOD. INSTEAD OF BEATING YOUR GUNS, TANKS AND WARSHIPS INTO PLOUGH SHARES SO THAT SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS CAN BE SAVED FROM THE SCOURAGE OF WAR AS YOU PLEDGED IN THE UN TREATY, YOU ARE BUSY CREATING MORE AND MORE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND CYNICALLY MAKING THEM AVAILABLE TO VOLATILE NATIONS TO INCREASE YOUR SALES, YOUR WEALTH AND YOUR INFLUENCE. YOU HAVE DRIVEN ME FROM AND OUTLAWED THE PREACHING MY WORDS IN YOUR SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC PLACES. YOU HAVE ABANDONED MY LAWS AND ELEVATED AND MAKE “LEGAL” ACCORDING TO YOUR LAWS ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES- FAMILIES AND SEXUAL PARTNERS AND PRACTICES, TRUTHS, “RELIGIOUS” DOCTRINES. YOU HAVE OVER EXPLOITED MY NATURAL CREATION FOR SUSTAINED LIFE ON THIS PLANET FOR THE SELFISH GREED AND LUST OF YOUR SMALL CLUB; WHILE MARGINALISING AND MAKING NORMADS OF THE MAJORITY OF MY PEOPLE FOR YOUR FURTHER BRUTALISATION AND EXPLOITATION. YOU CLOSE YOUR BORDERS AND WATCH THEM DROWN AT SEA OR PERISH IN THE DESERT. YOU ARE USING YOUR ECONOMIC AND MILITARY MIGHT TO FORCE YOUR REBELLIOUS AND DEADLY POLICIES, PRACTICES AND LIFESTYLES ON MY PEOPLE EVERYWHERE.

CAN WE HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD SAYING TO HIS CHURCH IN JAMAICA:

“ANNOUNCE TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD- RICH AND POOR- THAT TOGETHER, THOUGH NOT IN EQUAL PROPORTION, YOU ARE STRETCHING MY CAPACITY TO KEEP MY PROMISE THAT I WILL NEVER AGAIN DESTROY THIS PLANET BY WATER. YOU ARE BREAKING THE DEVICES BY WHICH I HAVE LOCKED AWAY THE EXCESS WATERS IN ICE CAPS AND STORED THEM AWAY AT THE EXTREMITIES OF THE EARTH. WHEN THE GLACIERS AT THE NORTH AND SOUTH POLES AND IN THE HIGH MOUNTAINS BREAK EVEN I, THE CREATOR, WILL BE HARD PRESSED TO HOLD BACK THE FORCE AND ENRGY I HAD STORED IN THEM FOR SLOW AND ORDERLY RELEASE. I HAVE GIVEN YOU SIGNS AND WARNINGS IN FIRES, SEASONAL AND UNSEASONAL FLOODS AND IN RISING TIDES; I HAVE GIVEN YOUR SCIENTISTS KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGIES, AND TECHNIQUES TO PREDICT POTENTIAL CATASTROPHIC ACTIVITIES IN THE MAKING, BUT YOU HAVE BLINDED YOURSELVES BY YOUR HATRED, SELFISHNESS, AND GREED.

CAN WE HEAR GOD’S VOICE SAYING

“EVEN NOW AS DESTRUCTION STARKS, MY SON IS STILL THERE TO SAVE. CALL ON HIM.”

AND NOW TO OURSELVES, HAVE WE SEEN, HAVE WE HEARD THE LORD SAYING TO HIS CHURCH, IN PARTICULAR TO THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION OF HIS CHURCH IN THIS MONA, PAPINE, LIGUANEA AREA

“I HAVE A MISSION FOR YOU?

BECAUSE YOU WERE HIGHLY COMPLICIT IN THE OVER 300 YEARS OF EXPLOITATION AND DEFORMATION WHICH TOOK PLACE ON THESE THREE SUGAR PLANTATIONS- HOPE, MONA AND PAPINE- WHICH OCCUPIED THIS BEAUTIFUL VALLEY YOU BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPARATION.THE ORGANISATION OF LIFE ON THESE PLANTATIONS

CREATED THE DEEP DIVISIONS AND DISFUNCTIONALITIES YOU NOW SEE IN COMUNITIES AND FAMILIES. THE VIOLENCE AND DISCONNECTEDNESS WE NOW SEE EVEN WITHIN FAMILIES HAVE THEIR ROOTS IN THAT BRUTAL AND EXPLORTATIVE HISTORY,

“CAN WE HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD SAYING I THEREFORE HAVE A SPECIAL MISSION FOR YOU?”

“I AM GATHERING AN INCREASING NUMBER OF YOUNG PERSONS FROM THE FARTHEST REACHES OF JAMAICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND THE WORLD TO BUILD A NEW FIELD IN THIS VALLEY? I AM CREATING A LEARNING COMMUNITY; A NEW FIELD FOR THE NURTURING AND THE HARVEST. BUT REMEMBER A LEARNING COMMUNITY, A FIELD OF THE YOUNG CAN BE A DANGEROUS PLACE.THERE ARE MANY WHO DID NOT SOW BUT WOULD WISH TO REAP. THE INHABITANTS CAN QUICKLY LEARN THE WRONG THINGS AND DEVELOP WRONG HABITS. THEY CAN BE EVEN MORE EFFECTIVE PROMOTERS OF THOSE WRONG DOCTRINES.”

CAN WE HEAR THE LORD SAYING “I NEED MY CHURCH IN PARTICULAR THE ANGLICAN SEGMENT, TO SHINE MY LIGHT, THE RIGHT LIGHT, IN THIS VALLEY; TO TAKE MY GOOD NEWS AND BE THE YEAST TO INFUSE THE SPIRIT IN THIS MY NEW COMMUNITY. I HAVE BEEN PREPARING YOU FOR THIS.”

CAN WE HEAR THE LORD SAYING

“DO YOU DOUBT THAT I HAVE BEEN PREPARING YOU?” THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

1. IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THIS THIRD MILLENNIA SEVERAL INFLUENTIAL BODIES IN THE AREA INCLUDING THE TWO UNIVERSITIES BEGUN DISCUSSING AND PLANNING TO CREATE A UNIVERSITY TOWN TO INCLUDE THE ENTIRE AREA.
2. IN THAT SAME DECADE THREE RELATIVELY YOUNG PRIESTS FROM THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION WERE PLACED AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN THE BROWN’S TOWN CURE WHERE THEY

HAD A SIMILAR KIND OF FORMATIONANAL EXPERIENCE. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND DECADE THOSE THREE PRIESTS WERE ASSIGNED TO SERVICE THE SIX ANGLICAN CONGREGATIONS IN THE GREATER MONA VALLEY. ALL THE CONGREGATIONS WERE IN DECLINE AND LOOKING TO REBUILT BUT NONE HAD THE NEEDED FINANCIAL OR HUMAN RESOURCES;

3. ALSO AT THE BEGINNING OF THAT SECOND DECADE THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. ANDREW IN THE TWO MAIN CHURCHES DECIDED TO BEGIN TO WORK MORE CLOSELY IN WORSHIP AND IN OUT REACH;
4. THE WORKING TOGETHER EVOLVED INTO A RECOGNISABLE MOVEMENT WHICH ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION, ADMIRATION AND SUPPORT OF THE TWO MOST SENIOR BISHOPS OF THE DIOCESE;
5. AN EXTERNAL INSTITUTION WAS MOVED TO PROVIDE SEED FUNDING FOR RESEARCH AND PILOT TESTING WORK. THIS WORK NOT ONLY ESTABLISHED THE VIABILITY OF THE CONCEPT BUT THE PRIORITY AREAS IN WHICH THE COMMUNITIES WOULD WISH SUPPORT FROM A CHURCH-BASED GROUP SUCH AS THE ATG; AND
6. PRECISELY AT THE TIME THE FUNDING SUPPORT FROM THE EXTERNAL AGENCY CAME TO AN END, A MEMBER OF ONE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCHES IN THE VALLEYMADE A SIGNIFICANT DONATION TO FACILITATE WORK IN THE PRECISE AREAS IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE PILOT AS PRIORITIES FOR THE ATG.

SO, AS WE PREPARE TO OFFER OUR EXCUSES-NO MONEY, NO TIME, OUR CHURCH HAS ITS OWN PROJECTS AND WE NEED ALL THE FUNDS WE CAN GET,

CAN WE HEAR THE VOICE ASKING:

MEMBERS OF THE ATG DO YOU BELIEVE THESE REINFORCING DEVELOPMENTS WERE RANDOM, COINCIDENTAL OCCURRENCES?

NO, MY CHURCH, THEY WERE MY PREPARING YOU AND PREPARING
THE GROUND TO RECEIVE YOU.

THIS IS MY MISSION FOR YOU AT THIS TIME. YOU ARE WELL
PREPARED FOR IT. REMEMBER YOU DO MY WORK BETTER
TOGETHER. GO AND REMEMBER I WILL BE WITH YOU.

AMEN