



Wednesday Prayer

Reformation Sunday – The truth will make you free

***Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
John 8:31-32***

As I'm seated here pondering over this text, I receive a phone text from a group that was formed back in 2017, a group of law enforcement officers, social service providers, and others working for protection and justice for victims of trafficking. The text reads, *"Our female victim is in court today – pls pray for positive outcome! Pray for her next step at treatment program – continued protection and healing."*

Please pray. Pray that the truth of her situation will be heard by the court, and that the truth of all of us praying for her will be felt on her journey. Pray for her to be free, in both the legal sense and in the knowledge that she has a voice, she has strength, she is here among us and we believe her truth.

This week I listened to a sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota in 2015. He preached about the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 and said he preaches about this *every year*, engaging a text "where you are forced to deal with something you don't wanna deal with." He heard Tamar's voice saying, "I have a story to tell." And she spoke with worn assurance repeating, "Tell my story." He felt inadequate to share her story as a man and as a preacher, that there are others better equipped. She pressed on with "You must tell the story. Because what I experienced will continue until men, not just women, are willing to tell the story so that these cursed memories no longer have to be a part of people's minds and psyche." So he will tell the story, he will speak the truth.

One of these truths is in the violation of the survivor needing to fight for their truth to be believed, and not hidden for the sake of the powerful. In Tamar's story, King David (her father) heard all this and did nothing. He didn't want people to know there was something going on in the palace. So Tamar changes her clothes – changes from her richly adorned robe to sackcloth and ashes. In doing this, she spoke for herself to let everybody know there had been a violation. She still had strength in her spirit, and while this is a part of her story, this violation will not define her. She spoke her own truth.

Reverend Otis concludes with a passionate plea that "we must have the courage as preachers to teach people yes, to deal with the violation, but at the same time to change your clothes, don't live in the violation forever...God gave you a new song." So let us pray to hear the truth of survivors' stories, and to work together toward the freedom of new endings.

God, guide us in truth that we all might be free. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director, and community advocate for racial justice.

Listen to Rev. Otis' full sermon here <https://youtu.be/311rp7lv0Ps>, beginning at minute 17.