

## “Magnification” Sermon for December 24, 2017

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Luke 1:46-55

James 4:7-8, New International Version

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

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In 1856, Booker Taliaferro Washington was born into slavery in Virginia as the son of Jane, an African-American slave. After emancipation, she moved the family to West Virginia to join her husband Washington Ferguson. As a young man, Washington worked his way through Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (a historically black college now Hampton University), and attended college at Wayland Seminary (now Virginia Union University). In 1881, Washington was named as the first leader of the new Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, founded for the higher education of blacks.

When he was nine, Booker and his family in Virginia gained freedom under the Emancipation Proclamation as US troops occupied their region. Booker was thrilled by the formal day of their emancipation in early 1865. In Virginia with his reunited parents, the illiterate boy Booker began to painstakingly teach himself to read and attended school for the first time.

Washington worked in salt furnaces and coal mines in West Virginia for several years to earn money. He made his way east to Hampton Institute, walking most of the way, a school established to educate freedmen and their descendants, where he worked to pay for his studies.

In 1881, the Hampton Institute president Samuel C. Armstrong recommended then-25-year-old Washington to become the first leader of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (later Tuskegee Institute, now Tuskegee University), Tuskegee, AL. The new school opened on July 4, 1881, initially using space in a local church. The next year, Washington purchased a former plantation, which became the permanent site of the campus. Under his direction, his students literally built their own school: making bricks, constructing classrooms, barns and outbuildings; and growing their own crops

and raising livestock; both for learning and to provide for most of the basic necessities. This information and more can be found in his 1901 autobiography, "Up from Slavery." Like Mary, he glorified in God and God glorified him, taking him to corporate board rooms as well as the White House many times.

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We work so hard to please God, to be acceptable to God. David thought that he could please God by building God a great sanctuary. He reasoned, "Here I am living in this great palace, while God is living in a tent. God needs a house at least as great as the one I am living in.

When Nathan the prophet brought David's request to God, the response was laughter, "Will David indeed build a house suitable for me?" 'I took you the sheep pen to the palace, from being a pauper to being a prince over my people. Your very existence, such as it is today, was my initiative, God's action, God's doing. I have glorified you because you have adhered to, trusted in and relied upon me.' "I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you" (v. 9a).

God reminded David that it was God who gave David the victory. Those victories extended back to the lions and bears that David killed as a boy, and his victory over the giant, Goliath. They include David's success in evading the murderous Saul. They include his victories over the Philistines (1 Samuel 23:1-14) and Amalekites (1 Samuel 30). They include his victory over Abner, and Ishbosheth, the son of Saul (2 Samuel 2-4).

“I will make you a great name, like the name of the great ones who are in the earth.” Just as God magnified David's life, so the virgin sings, I magnify, I honor, I celebrate with joy, because the Mighty One has made me blessed to all generations. The High and Sovereign One of our ancestors has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

And what was true for David was true for Mary, and then it was also true for Booker T. Washington, and this final Sunday of Advent it is also true for you. If

you will glorify God in your life. If you will magnify God, worship and praise him with conviction and fervor and sincerity, God will magnify you. Once God has magnified your life, you will never be the same, you will come to know what it really means to live a blessed life. To the one who will draw unto us, our wants, our needs, our dreams and our hopes, if we will but draw unto him, fully, without reserve. Amen.