

“Renaissance” Sermon for May 27, 2018 Romans 8:12-17, John 3:1-9, 16-17

Renaissance means rebirth or revival. From the Old French renaissance literally means "rebirth," usually in a spiritual sense, from renastre "to be reborn anew."

The late historian Dr. Lerone Bennet, Jr who passed away on the 14th of February, appropriately during the national celebration of Black History Month, penned his final book in 2000, “Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln’s White Dream.” He wrote, the real Lincoln... was a conservative politician who said repeatedly that he believed in white supremacy. Not only that: He ... was literally forced - Count Adam Gurowski said, “He was literally whipped - 'into the glory of having issued the Emancipation Proclamation,' which Lincoln drafted in such a way that it did not in and of itself free a single slave.”

But it was the struggle of the Civil War, his witnessing the determination of freed slaves, and his final admission that perhaps Blacks were human beings equal to the Anglo Saxons of America, that he moved from being the most bigoted President of the United States, at least until Woodrow Wilson came along-to being hailed as “the Great Emancipator.”

Whether or not the mythic label is legitimate or not, the nation’s perception of him moved from being a vitriolic, backwoods Kentucky-born white supremacist to being one who issued decrees to form all-Black cavalry troops to defend the Union and to offer land to those who valiantly served. It was also his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, who like Eleanor Roosevelt in a later time, would convince her Presidential spouse to move away from his white supremacist views and toward a more holistic vision of America.

Renaissance, rebirth, renewal is not simply a matter of saying yes to God, of going through confirmation, of believing in the basics of the Christian faith. It's a process. It was a process for Joseph's brothers, who in an evil plot sought to bring about his demise. They meant it for evil, God meant it for good. As Joseph accepted and forgave them, they were unable to accept it. It took more personal struggle for them to believe that it was possible for forgiveness and gratitude to dwell in the heart of one who had been so violated and wronged. Once accepted, they, too experienced Renaissance. God can achieve renewal and rebirth for each of us, when we allow the spirit to invade, control and rule in our lives. Let the wind of God begin to blow. Amen.