



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

***August 22, 2010***

***Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time***

***Rev. Jeremiah Wright***

RCL: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17

LM: Isaiah 66:18-21; Psalm 117:1, 2; Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13; Luke 13:22-30

We are in a “Season of Death.” After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where the United States used weapons of mass destruction to kill 143,000 civilians in three days (and 100,000 more over the next year who died of radiation), the “Season of Death” has deepened and darkened. First came Vietnam and then the wars in Central Africa (Angola, the Congo, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa)—a “Season of Death.”

Then came Desert Storm, the Palestinian-Israeli Wars, Kosovo, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Kenya, and Yemen and the “forty years” of sanctions against Cuba and people of color (in Iraq and Libya)—a “Season of Death.”

Then mysteriously (seemingly out of nowhere or out of someone’s secret laboratories) the HIV virus appeared, which has killed an average of 7,000 persons in sub-Saharan African each day since January 1, 2000—a “Season of Death.”

And in the “Season of Death,” those who are poor (or to use Frantz Fanon’s term, the “wretched of the earth”) have suffered non-stop. The “fat cats” have health insurance. The “First World” enjoys Caribbean and South Pacific cruises, at the end of which the amounts of food the cruise ships throw away weekly is enough to feed countless hungry people in places like Haiti.

The so-called “World Powers” have protection, prosperity, and enough military might to enjoy a standard of living unheard of (or undreamed of) in India or Soweto, Kumasi or Ethiopia, Jenin or Hebron. Those who suffer through this “Season of Death,” therefore, are much like Ralph Ellison’s “Invisible Man.” They are out of sight and out of mind.

The TV cameras keep these poor ones hidden from our view, so most of us do not give them a passing thought on the average day. Their invisibility to us and our insensitivity to them, however, do not make their day-to-day reality in this “Season” any less real or painful. In fact, if anything, it makes their reality even more painful!

Yet the readings today remind us how God makes provision for his Word of Life to be heard even in a “Season of Death.” The days of King Jehoiakim, King Zedekiah, and the captivity of Jerusalem were a “Season of Death.” When those in power do not seek



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justice for poor, needy, and vulnerable people, they suffer a “Season of Death” and their cries for human help seem to fall on deaf ears.

But God, the psalmist reminds us, hears their cries. God rescues the “helpless” from the grasp of the unjust. God, in other words, stays one step ahead of injustice by making provision while the most vulnerable are yet in the womb. God makes a way for them from the time they are born.

The writer of Hebrews echoes the importance of recognizing God’s design, God’s desire, and God’s decree for justice even in a “Season of Death” . . . because he equates acceptable worship with justice. Echoing the theme of Israel’s prophets, Hebrews says that worship without justice is unacceptable to God. In a “Season of Death,” God’s Word is a Word of Life.

The gospel lesson illustrates the epistle’s principle, recounting an example of “acceptable worship” during which justice is done. Jesus demonstrates in a worship service that curing that which oppresses (or binds) people is far more important than the customs that keep them bound. Righteousness is more important than ritual, and helping is true holiness—acceptable worship.

### *Children’s Time*

Bring a large basket of grapes and select several children to participate. Tie the hands of half the children (four of eight, for instance) behind their backs, so that they cannot reach the grapes in the basket. Then blindfold the other half of the group, so that they cannot see the other half, whose hands are bound.

Tell the children to enjoy what it is you have provided for them, and put the blindfolded children right next to the basket of grapes, where they can reach the grapes and enjoy them, even though they are blindfolded. Ask the children whose hands are bound if they can get what it is you have provided. Take the blinders off the children who were blindfolded, and ask them if the fact that they could not see the other children who were right there with them meant anything?

The fact that we cannot see those among us who are bound does not make their lives any less real or painful. Once we do see them, however, we have to do more than acknowledge their presence. We have to “loose them” so that they can enjoy what it is that God has provided for all of us!

### *Musical Suggestions [LH]*

Of All the Spirit’s Gifts to Me—The United Methodist Hymnal 336



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How Can I Say Thanks (To God Be the Glory)—The New Century Hymnal 14

Lead On Eternal Sovereign—The New Century Hymnal 573

The Lord Is My Hope—Gather Comprehensive 613

We Gather in Worship—Gather Comprehensive 750

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