

Something Within

February 5, 2023 at First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

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Texts: 2 Corinthians 4: 7-10

*“Preachers and teachers would make their appeal,
Fighting as soldiers on great battlefields;
When to their pleadings my poor heart did yield,
All I can say, there is something within.”*

*“Have you that something, that burning desire?
Have you that something, that never doth tire?
Oh, if you have it- that Heavenly Fire!
Then let the world know there is something within”.*

*“Something within me that holdeth the reins,
Something within me that banishes pain.
Something within me I cannot explain,
All that I know there is something within.”*

These are the words penned by the inimitable Lucie Eddie Campbell-Williams, a singer, songwriting, and pianist. Mrs. Campbell- Williams, native of Mississippi, and born just 20 years after the abolition of slavery on this nation. This black woman moved to Memphis with her mom at two. Luvenia A. George and Ada Gilkey notes in their piece “ The Black Perspective in Music” that by 1916 Campbell – Williams became the first Director of the National Baptist Convention USA and served in this position for 47 years.

Memphis is known for Beale Street and the blues. It is told that Lucie met a young man who was blind named, Connie Rosemond. They met outside of an establishment and had a conversation about him singing the blues. However, Rosemond refused to sing the blues claiming, “I’m trying to be a Christian in this dark world, and I believe I have found a way out of this darkness into light. I can’t explain it, but there’s something within me.” This is the inspiration from which Campbell felt compelled to write “Something Within” now known as her

first song.

Friends, we've made it to the second month of the year. Already? How did this happen? February marks the celebration for a few important dates/moments in history. This week we celebrated Ground Hog Day, next week we'll celebrate Valentine's Day*(this is your reminder), and President's Day. However, there is another special occasion.

February is a month that has been set aside to acknowledge a people that have given so much to this country - Black People. Through this month, we pause to reflect on figures and events that have made countless contributions to our society. These inspirations date back to 1915 by a man named Carter Goodwin Woodson. Woodson studied and earned a PhD from Harvard in 1912. He along with a few others felt compelled to form what is now Association for the Study of Negro Life and History which sent out a press release in February of 1926, announcing the creation of Negro History Week. It was the second week of the month which has President Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. This morphed into becoming what we know as Black History Month- by 1976 it was formally recognized by former President Gerald Ford.

Lucie, Connie, and Carter all had something in common, they knew that although the external forces would pay us all a visit, yet there was still something within. That "something" had to be shared with the world, and it was worth it.

Today I'd argue, friends, that the Apostle Paul, had similar sentiments. The church in Corinth was not a feat, some would say weak. Paul visited and wrote to them to be of encouragement to stay the course of Christ. A place where idolatry, misguidance and confusion were the norm - Paul's commitment withstood the test of time. However, like anything there were those who didn't support him spreading the good news.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

(Matthew 13:44 ESV)

At time of our text, we are met with a charge on effective ministry versus that which is not when we do ministry. It is important not to get confused, it's not about us Paul was a man who recognized that he was speaking on behalf of Christ. Paul knew that we are like clay jars with a treasure within us. He proclaimed the gospel when opposition came, and doubt set in.

Paul goes on to write that we are like Clay Jars with a treasure inside. Clay jars are not secure, nor are they considered to be the most valuable or significant item in a household.

Paul had proven to be honest, faithful. The light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the living Lord, had led Paul not only into the faith. But also an unselfish Christian ministry. This doesn't not credit him, but ultimately God.

FOUR CONTRASTS:

1. V.8: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.."

We are pressed on every side but not crushed, I wonder if you have ever felt the pressing of life.

By definition to be pressured - continuous physical force on or against an object by something in contact with it.

Lalah Delia: bestselling author, educator, certified spiritual practitioner writes , "Transmutation: Grapes must be crushed to make wine, Diamonds form under pressure, Olives are pressed to release oil, Seeds grow in darkness, Whenever, you feel crushed, under pressure, pressed, or in darkness, you're in a powerful place of transformation/transmutation."

2. V8: "...we are perplexed, but not in despair;"

Life presents us with circumstances that we just don't know what to do where to go and how to go about it. In our human wisdom and in our faith.

There are moments in the journey that the pressures of life: financial dilemma, health crisis, our job our school can all make us confused.

God is omniscience- he knows everything, he's not confused.

I know the Lord will make a way!

3. V9: "Persecuted, but not forsaken..."

Paul understood that his ministry was a targeted,
it's through his commitment that we see the resilience of a true Christian in a world
where being the same or going along to get along is normalized. When Paul stood on
trial, at his defense the first time, it's recorded in 2nd Tim. 4:17 "the Lord stood by me."

First Corinthian 16:9

4. V9: "...cast down, but not destroyed."

I've been knocked down, but not out
I've always looked up to Muhammad Ali... Inflatable punching bag...
I could've figured out it was what was inside of it....water.... every time I'd throw a punch, a
few seconds later the source that was inside of it would make it rise again.
Whenever you push this balloon, he would fall back but then will come right back up if used to
baffle me that no matter how hard I punch no matter how many times I punched that bloom it
would not stay down.

The strength that we have is not in ourselves, but in Jesus!

*"I met God one morn'#, my soul feeling bad,
Heart heavy laden with a bowed down head.
He lifted my burden, made me so glad,
All that I know there is something within".*

*"Something within me that holdeth the reins,
Something within me that banishes pain;
Something within me I cannot explain,
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