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## PASTORAL LETTER – FEBRUARY 2021

Dear friend,

Everyone has a right to complete love and happiness and freedom. Someone who lived by this maxim was Isabella Baumfree. Isabella was born in Rifton, New York, which is about 28 miles southwest of Rhinebeck. We know Isabella by her Christian name, Sojourner Truth.

I would like to dedicate this pastoral letter to the witness of Sojourner Truth not only out of a desire to observe Black History Month, but also out of a desire to conform to scriptures. It is biblical to recognize Christian heroes. We do that to demonstrate gratitude for past contributions and to draw personal strength and inspiration for our own journey. The Bible says in Hebrews 11: *“Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”*

The faith witness of Sojourner Truth demonstrates that Christianity can shape our lives for the better. It also demonstrates that the Holy Spirit can use someone else's faithful example to help us stretch our ideas into something big. Historians tell us that Sojourner was born into slavery. She was treated harshly, but was able to endure her predicament through hard work and daily conversations with God, which led to a spiritual experience known as being “baptized in the Holy Spirit.” Spiritual baptisms were a trademark of a spiritual movement in American society known as the Second Great Awakening.

Sojourner Truth was imbued with the Holy Spirit and gifted with the ability to preach, which she faithfully and fervently did against slavery and in favor of women's rights. Her words were inspirational. Her words drew large crowds. Her example was impactful. It inspired others to become abolitionists.

The Holy Spirit planted in her a dream to make society better. This may have sounded like an impossible and difficult dream, but she allowed her dream to stretch her moral imagination and to take her to new places and experiences.

One of her evocative quotes was, ***“We have all been thrown down so low that nobody thought we'd ever get up again, but we have been long enough trodden now; we will come up again, and now I am here.”***

Similarly, Jesus was given a dream when God's Spirit was poured into him. The Holy Spirit gave him a calling and purpose. He was to become the Messiah. Being the Messiah was a complicated and challenging dream, but Jesus grew into that.

In one of his memorable quotes, Jesus quoted the Prophet Isaiah and said:

***“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor . . .”***  
(See Luke 4:18-19)

Both Sojourner Truth and Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience emboldened them to live into the plan that God had for their lives, and the world has been a better place for it. I thank God for the witness of Sojourner Truth. I thank God for the faithfulness of Jesus, the Messiah, every day of my life.

What dream has the Holy Spirit placed in your heart?

Remember, your dream matters.

May you live into the fullness of God's plan for your life!

Warmly,  
Pastor Luis

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