



15TH PASTORAL ANNIVERSARY

FOR THE REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY
SENIOR PASTOR | ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH



2 CONGREGATIONS + 1 WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

FEATURING OUR BROTHER IN CHRIST:
REV. DR. MARCUS D. COSBY
SENIOR PASTOR

WHEELER AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH
HOUSTON, TEXAS

SUNDAY
SEPT 24

11:00AM | DOORS OPEN AT 10AM

THE MUSIC CENTER
AT STRATHMORE

5301 TUCKERMAN LANE
NORTH BETHESDA, MD 20852

IN-PERSON OR LIVE-STREAM

LET US THANK GOD, WITNESS & CELEBRATE 15 YEARS OF PASTOR & PEOPLE!





Date: September 24, 2023

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Marcus Cosby, Senior Pastor
Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church

Sermon Title: “The Word Is Working”
Pastor’s 15th Anniversary Celebration

Scripture:

*He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like.
A man scatters seed on the ground." (Mark 4:26 NIV)*

SERMON SUMMARY:

In celebration of the 15th anniversary of Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Rev. Dr. Marcus Cosby breaks open the word of God by identifying how the **seed**, which is **the word of God**, is at work within and among us. Highlighting several critical points of how the word of God is at work in our lives, Rev. Cosby notes, the word of God is at work:

1. In **spaces of unrealized possibilities**.
 - God’s word is scattered in all types of places, knowing God can bring good out of challenging circumstances.
2. In the **providence of God**
 - The providence of God is described as God's unseen actions behind the scenes today that impact our tomorrows. Rev. Cosby emphasized that God is already shaping our future, even while we navigate the present events.
3. In the **patience of God**
 - The sermon touched on God's patience in allowing the Word to work in our lives. God is **longsuffering**, never giving up, and waiting for the word to bear fruit in our lives.
4. In the **progression of God's People**
 - Rev. Cosby described the progression of God's people, likening it to the growth of a seed into a stalk. This growth signifies something is happening, but it's crucial to understand that the stalk is not the final fruit. Believers must allow the seed to go through this stage to reach full development and then the harvest.

As we move toward the end of the sermon, there is, for the sower, satisfaction in the full development of the seed. Pastor Wesley has been our sower, and now, after 15 years, he can see the development of the word of God in the lives of the believers he has touched. A part of that satisfaction comes as Pastor Wesley bears witness to how God’s people move out and bless the world. Yes, the word is working, and now the people of God can no longer sit in the pew but must move out into the world and make a difference.

KEY POINTS:

- The word of God is at work in our lives, and it is working to transform us.
- The word is offered to us through the written word (the Bible), the spoken word (the sermon), and the living word (Jesus Christ). All three are working in us.
- Alfred Street is blessed to have a sower, a preacher, who sows into us, regularly.
- The word being sown into us is a recurring experience, a rewarding experience, and an experience that transforms us.
 - We no longer take off our earrings or put Vaseline on our faces. We have been changed.
- The change within us happens from the inside out, not the outside in.
- The seed is the word of God. But when you plant a seed, there is a season of waiting before the seed becomes a harvest.
 - This leads us to a deeper understanding of our inability to hurry God and the requirement of simply waiting for God.
- While we are waiting, the word is working, and the seed becomes a stalk. But the stalk is still not the fruit. There is still room for progress. God will bring us to full development if we wait on the Lord, and not grow weary in well-doing.
- God may not come when you want him, but you will want him when he comes.
- Rev. Cosby notes that the parable, which begins in Mark 4:26, is held by some to be **eschatological** and by some to be **existential**. An eschatological understanding of the text points to the end times when all will come together in a complete knowledge of God. An existential account of this text suggests how we should move and act today. Dr. Cosby notes that the text is both, but emphasizes how it directs our actions toward making a difference in today's world.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS:

1. Rev. Cosby quotes Howard Thurman, reminding us that God wants us to grow into our crowns (see additional resources). As we grow, God is patient with us. Rev. Cosby ended his sermon with the lyrics to an old song, "Please be patient with me; God is not through with me yet." In what areas has God been patient with you? Can you identify other places where you want God to be patient with you?

2. Rev. Cosby and Pastor Wesley have been friends and have walked alongside one another in their Christian journeys for over 40 years. Who has walked with you, blessed you, and held you accountable along your Christian journey? If that person sat beside you today, what would you say to them?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. The fourth chapter of Mark includes three parables: the parable of the sower, the growing seed, and the mustard seed. When Jesus taught these parables, he spoke to an agricultural community, using agrarian metaphors. Can you think of other agricultural metaphors Jesus uses in his teaching throughout the gospels? If Jesus were among us now, what metaphors might he use to speak to contemporary communities?

2. Rev. Cosby reminds us that when we look at Jesus, we see what God is up to in and for the world. Please select two of your favorite scriptures about Jesus's work. What do these scriptures teach us about what God is up to through Jesus?

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Rev. Cosby points out that God has blessed Pastor Wesley with the power to teach and preach the Word. In turn, those to whom he teaches and preaches are blessed. How has Pastor Wesley's preaching sowed into your walk as a Christian? How has it blessed or challenged you?

2. Rev. Cosby notes that transformation is inevitable when the word takes root in your heart. He, for example, is different from the 1995 version of himself because the word has taken root in his heart. What changes have happened to your behavior because God's word has taken root in you?

3. Rev. Cosby spoke about the *stalky stage of development* when something has happened, but the full development has not yet occurred. In the stalky phase, a person is not yet ready to move into the fullness of their work for God. Have you ever been in a stalky phase? Have you ever accepted an assignment before you were ready? What happened? What did you learn? How can you benefit now from that experience?

4. When the Word begins producing fruit in believers, we are compelled to testify about God's goodness and find ways to make a positive difference in someone else's life or the world. How have you made a difference for others or in the world? What other opportunities do you see for making a difference? What is the cost to you if you refrain from helping to bless others?

5. We will never be perfect people, but we can progress as individuals, a church, and a nation. When you look back over your life, what are some areas of progress in your life to which you can point? How did God aid you in that progression? What do you dream for the progress of the church, of the nation?

6. Rev. Cosby reminds us after the sower scatters the seed, there is a waiting period before the seed produces fruit. The soil works on the seed in the waiting period. Likewise, during our waiting periods, God is working on us. What are some of the lessons God has taught you during waiting periods? Which of these lessons has served you the most deeply?

7. In the sermon, we learn of the **providence of God**, the **patience of God**, and the **progression of God**. Providence is God's power in our lives today while orchestrating our future. The patience of God is God's long-suffering nature. The progression of God is God's hand taking us from stalk to fruit. Which of these three movements do you sense God is at work on in your life right now? How does that feel? What are you learning?

"CAN I PUSH IT?" QUESTIONS:

1. Those who hold ideas different from yours on immigration, diversity, LGBTQIA+ persons, reparations, etc., can be seen as "other" and even enemies. However, Rev. Cosby reminds us that the sower sowed the seed, the word of God, all over the place, even in areas that seem unlikely to bear fruit. How do we, with the love of Christ, sow in places that are hard, rocky, or thorny? What happens if we refuse to do so?

2. We learn that one aspect of preparing for a promised harvest is a season of waiting for the seed to grow beyond the stalk to the fruit. In our nation, those who have suffered under the weight of racism, sexism, xenophobia, and oppression are still waiting for a harvest of righteousness. How long are folk supposed to wait for the coming of justice? How do we continue to dwell in these circumstances?

FOR INDIVIDUAL OR VILLAGE STUDY

ACTIVITY

1. Waiting on God is never easy. But this morning's sermon reminds us that we cannot hurry God. We must wait until God is ready to move in our lives.
 - a. List five strategies believers can use to strengthen their ability to wait on God, grow their faith in God, and increase their trust in God during a season of waiting.

2. Earlier in the guide, we asked which of these three movements (providence, patience, and progression) God is most actively working in your life. Take some time to journal about the other two movements. Ask yourself how you might walk with God to strengthen your ability to trust God in the other two instances.

SPIRIT :

1. Many of us have heard the phrase, "You are blessed to be a blessing." Rev. Cosby instructs that if the word of God has blessed us, we are responsible for going out into the world and blessing others. Consider how you might be a blessing this week to those in your home, your job, your church, or any other place you find yourself.
 - a. Write a prayer asking God to help you see the opportunity to be that blessing and place it on your bathroom mirror. Repeat it each day until you have been able to be a blessing in the world.

2. Rev. Cosby notes a stalk appears after the seed is in the soil for a while. While there is no fruit yet, the stalk is evidence that something is happening. Think about a time when you were in your “stalky” stage. What did you have to stop doing or start doing to go from stalk to fruit? What role did the Holy Spirit play in this growth? How do those lessons impact you now?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. As you consider how to be a blessing to others,
 - a. please remember nominations for ASBC’s Church Council are open. The link for Council nominations is, https://alfredstreet.formstack.com/forms/church_officers_nomination_form.
 - b. There are also a plethora of ministries in which you might serve. Please see the listing of ministries for ASBC by clicking on this link, <https://www.alfredstreet.org/ministries/>
 - c. If you are not a member of ASBC, please consider the opportunities available at your church.
2. Rev. Cosby mentioned an older gospel song, Please Be Patient with Me. Please enjoy this offering as part of your week’s devotion. <https://youtu.be/-qYbGOjXuWM?si=obwPbHUmgzUm0nnm>
3. Rev. Cosby quotes Howard Thurman from The Mood of Christmas, saying, “*God placed a crown above our heads and challenged us to grow into it.*” The context of the quote can be found here. We pray Howard Turman’s words will bless you. <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/culture/holidays/christmas-readings/the-work-of-christmas#:~:text=The%20Singing%20of%20the%20Angels&text=A%20crown%20is%20placed%20over,by%20the%20singing%20of%20angels>.