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REV. DR. WILLIAM AUGUSTUS JONES, JR: Members and friends of the University community, it is with gladness of heart that I come to this place and to this occasion. I almost said, "to this remote place," where all you see is sort of off the beaten path. I flew into Kansas City, and it took me longer to get from Kansas City to Ottawa than it did ___?? (brief sound problem with the recording and it cuts out for a moment) ___?? and what have you given to emphasis on Afro-American heritage. I understand that this is a captive crowd and it's hard to preach to a captive crowd. I pray that you will not adopt the attitude of my nine-year-old son after you've heard me today. After service a few months ago, we were riding home in the car and he suddenly leaned over the front seat and said to me, "Daddy, I've decided that I'm going to be a preacher." I said, "when did you make that decision?" He said, "while you were preaching this morning." I said, "well tell me about it, how did you come to this decision?" He said, "well, after listening to you this morning, I decided that it's a whole lot easier to stand up and holler than it is to sit down and listen." (crowd laughs) I pray to God that will not be your attitude following this sermon. There is an interesting word in the book of Isaiah that I want to lift for our consideration, it's verse 4 of chapter 40. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." I want to talk about God, the revolutionary. God, the revolutionary. Certain words produce fear in certain people. Certain language spoken in a certain context has an amazing capacity to inflame human emotions. There are some pulpits in this land where I would not be permitted to stand and talk about God, the revolutionary. For you see, some would immediately assert that the word revolutionary is productive of ill will and then others would simply charge me with sacrilege and blasphemy. How dare you to link the precious name of the eternal with a vile and vicious concept like revolution. Certain words are productive of certain fears in certain people. It hasn't been long since liberal and radical were considered bad words. Now, militant and revolutionary are at the top of the bad words which, they're unpopular they're distasteful. The majority of Americans would rather not hear, but whether we like it or not the idea of revolution is with us. In fact, it has always been with us. Revolution is no innovation, no recent development. It is part and parcel of the human pilgrimage. According to Aristotle, the universal and chief cause of the revolutionary impulse is the desire for equality. When men think that they are equal to those who have more than they themselves. The revolutionary impulse is rooted and grounded in the desire to be free and in the ineluctable surge of the human script, I want to be free. Something inside of me, something deep down in me, something that has an amazing capacity for self-transcendence—something in me—that mystical something called the soul pulsates and pushes me, demands, and drives me to the point where I must break out of any confinement which mere men subject me. I want to be free. Something good and God-like in me revolts against tyranny in any form. In our world, freedom is so rare and suppression so common that revolution has become commonplace. I have seen the results of the revolutionary ferment in Europe. Not long ago aboard of flight from Geneva to Lisbon, I talked

face-to-face with victims of South African apartheid. Here in the land of my own nativity, I have been victimized by cast, class, and color. Almost everywhere today there are uprisings, rebellions and revolts against human powers that have become demonic. Blacks are revolting against the democratic myth and against the plantation ethic. The youth are rebelling against adult hypocrisy. Everywhere there are those who refuse to accept synthetic values, _____?? freedom and degenerate democracy. Figures strange and peculiar are emerging all over the place. They speak in rough and abusive language, and one almost gets the feeling that the rocks are crying out. We're hearing some rough sermons. Geology is preaching. Some rough sounds are coming up from the squalor of a decadent social order and we'd better listen to what they are saying. Oh, I know that the language is often crude and callous. I know that these sounds are inarticulate, but the groans are legitimate and it's the groans that God listens to. That's what he heard coming up from the banks of the Nile in the long, long ago. See, in all of his crudeness there is a genuine distaste of any system which excludes, denies, and dehumanizes. In this sense, they're on the side of right and I'll be bold to suggest you today that in our world, revolution is right, and right is revolutionary. The wrong is so prominent and so pervading that it almost seems right to be wrong. Our values have become so twisted, that truth and justice and goodness seem to represent the minority point of view and those who deem it their duty to challenge the emissaries of evil often find themselves relegated to the status of renegades. The most bitter scorn is reserved for men who seek to achieve justice. The meanest and most violent remarks are directed at us when we are most imitative of the field preacher from Nazareth. If you want to be scarred and wounded, begin to trouble the land in the name of the crucified one. Heal the pangs of the hungry, heal the wounds of the Vietnamese, challenge the whole social system, attack the emptiness of crass materialism—you want to walk the lonesome valley all by yourself—refuse to bow at the altar of the American trinity of racism, militarism, and capitalism. I reiterate—in our world, right is revolutionary. If this be so, and it is. Revolution is not necessarily evil. God himself is revolutionary in character. When I look at him work and hear him speak in the record of his revelation, I cannot help calling him God, the revolutionary. For to and through a man named Isaiah, he said with cutting clarity and piercing pointedness, “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.” Now this word was spoken for the comfort of captives by the rivers of Babylon. It was received fresh from God by the prophet of the captivity, and the preacher to the parish. It was a word that told the present predicament and an ultimate ____??. It made God an ever-present reality and a very present help in trouble. For down in Babylon, faith had burned low, and hope was on holiday. Those Jews had made a fundamental error—cut off from Jerusalem, they considered themselves divorced from divinity. They didn't think they could get to God outside of Jerusalem and they just knew that God couldn't reach them down in battle. That's why they couldn't raise a hymn down by the rivers of Babylon. That's why they raised the query, “how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?” Babylon in their reckoning was bereft of the holy presence, and it took a preacher—one of their own, to speak through the mist of Israel's tears and inform her that divinity was not limited or restricted by geography. That the eternal wasn't bound by human highways and rural routes. Jerusalem might be headquarters but stations are to be found everywhere. Zion is the chief shrine, but God lives everywhere. Heaven might be his throne but the whole earth is his footstool, and he can march in Babylon as well as in Jerusalem. It took Isaiah to make known to Israel the truth that God is very local. He is wherever I am. Because he is, I am, and where I am he is. Jane Adams quoted in her poem titled, *There Is a River*, “A certain person went to heaven in search of the river of God and found it not. Upon returning he heard these words, ‘oh fool, you have traveled far to find what

you've crossed over time and again. For the river of God is in whole state streets is running black with men.' 'Then maybe Chicago's the city of God,' said I 'perhaps' said he, 'to find that city you need not wings to fly but eyes to see.'" Wherever you are, God is. He's not only there but he knows your plight and he hears your groans. God is the greatest man of conscience. God is the chief revolutionary. Listen, do you hear what he said? "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain." Do you see the picture? Look at the portal. First thing I see is inequality. In fact, that's all I see. Inequality, disparity, awful gaps—it's a scene of unevenness. Valleys here and mountains there, crookedness where there ought to be straightness, rough places instead of plain places—that's inequality! God's not talking geography or geology, he's not describing the landscape or the structure of rock formations—he's not speaking as a highway engineer. No! God is not interested in rolling hills and sinking valleys, dips and curves in the terrain don't disturb infinite intelligence, but he is disturbed by that poignant scene where some dwell on the mountain at the expense of those who suffer in the valley. He's deeply disturbed by the dips, the curves and the ruts in human nature and he says to Isaiah, and to me and to you, "this thing must be changed, and it will be changed in revolutionary manner. These valleys are going to be raised by the tearing down of those mountains. Crooked way is going to be straightened out and the rough place will be smoothed up." Now the word for that is revolutionary. Much concern is being expressed today about an emerging ethic of violence, of course this alleged violence is really a smoke screen and a facade thrown up by certain reactionaries. Everybody is concerned about the new black quest for power and I'm afraid that there are those, too many as a matter of fact, who want to equate black power with black violence. Black power is not really an evil omen, in truth it's a ____??. called to fervor and courage. At rock bottom it is theological in nature, for it is concerned basically with the great questions of being and destiny. Who am I? Where am I bound? It is a right response to a false anthropology, a doctrine of man which traditionally has been inimical to black personhood and black peoplehood and violence is not a part of the black cultural ethos. Violence is akin to Americanism. When Rap Brown says that "violence is as American as cherry pie," he's right on that. He's wrong on a lot of things, but he's right on that. Any serious student of history knows that the roots of violence sink deeply in western culture. Stories of despotism related by Herodotus, the accounts of the Caesars by Tacitus and Gibbon and the historical plays of William Shakespeare all seem to indicate that significant social change has occurred in western culture only by and through violence and even the Bible asserts without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. So, the spirit of violence is no black phenomenon. I was never so aware of western violence until I saw the glorification of torture and barbarism in the tower of London. This land was taken by violence. We won independence from England by violence. The black man was enslaved kept in bondage by violence. We even fought ourselves violently in the Civil War and in each succeeding war the nation has shown an amazing capacity for violence. Daughters of the American Revolution, a group of nice respectable women, exist to romanticize and perpetuate the memory of a violent struggle—and this violent ethics so inseparably related to the nation has manifested itself in a multitude of domestic ills. A lot of people are worried to death today about violence. The black panthers have upset a lot of people, people who were never upset by the actions of the Klan—the actions of men like Mr. Bilbo and Mr. Wallace. Now understand me, I'm no apostle of violence. I'm committed to the ethic of love. I do not condone violence but as a student of history under God I do know that God, through his permissive will, permits evil structures to be attacked and shaken by rods of his wrath. I know that in the world some men are unconscious instruments of the justice of God. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Jeroboam, Cyrus, Herod, Nero, and others have served as rods

of his wrath. You see, God has a leveling process. If you soar high at the expense of others, he brings you down. If you suffer for his name's sake, he lifts you up. He abases the exalted, he lifts the lowly and at times he does it in revolutionary manner. I hear the disciples say to Jesus one day, “master, look at these buildings and these stones,” but Jesus replies, “There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.” Man in his pride and in his ego centric predicament has erected some awesome mountains to his own glory. Man in his selfishness, has consigned his brother to the low place but God, I tell you has a great leveling process. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. You see truth is not determined by popular vote. Barabbas might win the election and Jesus might lose the vote. Lie might win at the polls but truth across the earth will rise again. All evil must ultimately be liquidated. All hypocrisy must one day end. God I tell you, is revolutionary in his righteousness. When we flout his will and mistreat his mercy, he responds in judgment. The God I serve is a revolutionary. When God created, he did not summons the angels for a concert. He disturbed nothingness and shook-up chaos until morning stars started to sing and sons of God started to shout. When God delivered Israel, he did not carry them on invisible wings to the promised land. No, he carried them in a roundabout way over rough and rocky terrain through terror and through trial. When God judged Israel, he raised up an Amos, who had the audacity to go up to Bethel to the king's chapel and break up church—and when God got ready to redeem the whole creation, he didn't dispatch angels, he didn't put the stars on parade, and he didn't bring forth the dead from ages past. Oh no, when he purchased our pardon and delivered our souls from the bondage of death, he experienced the agony of a birth at Bethlehem. Yes, he entered our humanity, he invaded our ranks, he took on our nature; born in ghetto surroundings, knew sorrow and rejection, cried in Bethlehem, baptized in Jordan, tempted on a mountain, preached in Galilee, deserted by his own, tried by his accusers, sentenced to a death of shame, struggle of Golgotha, died on calvary, but he took captivity captive—made us all sons of the eternal God. I'll follow him; I'll believe his word; I'll trust his grace. He's routed the alien; he's taken captivity captive. In him I see God, the revolutionary at work with the great leveling process. In Jesus Christ, the mountains are made low, the rough places are made plain. Thank God one day, all flesh shall see it together. It may be that the prophetic lyrics of my slave foreparents are coming to fruition. For beneath burning suns and dark skies in the cotton fields of dixie, they cried out, “there's a bright side somewhere,” through parched lips, they lifted their voices as a canticle of praise, saying “I'm so glad trouble don't last always. Our God is the revolutionary God, who lifts the humble and brings down those who would flout his will and mistreat his mercies.”

(crowd applause)

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