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(choir sings 2 songs)

REV. DR. WILLIAM AUGUSTUS JONES, JR: Here now the lesson as contained in the book of Judges, chapter five beginning with verse 1 and ending with verse 7. "Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord For the avenging of Israel, When the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, When thou marchest out of the field of Edom, The earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, The clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, Even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel. In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, In the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, And the travellers walked through byways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, Until that I Deborah arose, That I arose a mother in Israel." God bless the reading of his word.

(choir sings)

SPEAKER #1: Join me now in singing our hymn of consecration for this morning's worship experience, number 193, "Faith of Our Mothers."

(choir and congregation sing "Faith of Our Mothers")

JONES: The writer of Judges declares in verse 7 of chapter 5, "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, Until that I Deborah arose, That I arose a mother in Israel." I Wanna talk for the next little while about *Deborah's Example*. *Deborah's Example*. In Shakespearean jargon, the times are out of joint. Well, whenever the home and the family get in trouble, then the times are inevitably out of joint. You will readily admit that life in the present era is terribly disjointed, what with so many rumblings in so many places. We are caught in the swirling vociferous currents of domestic crisis after domestic crisis. Never before has there been so much a people on so many fronts. I have searched my own memory and it provides no scene to duplicate the present dismay and disenchantment. This is the day of strife and woe and worry and fear on a massive and almost pervasive scale. I'm afraid that this is the day in which those who've sown the

wind are reaping the whirlwind and one of the real tragedies is that young people coming to maturity now have been handed a rather synthetic legacy. It is a tainted legacy, spoiled by the sins of the fathers and the mothers. I'm afraid that many of our children have received too much of the wrong things and too little of the right things—and somehow or other by a God-given endowment called the sixth sense, many of them have detected deep hypocrisies and rather sinister behavior on the part of many of their elders. They've come of age in a world of false anthropologies where the Machiavellian principle, might makes right, dominates the social landscape. With a vision clearer than many will admit, many young people see the madness of the present order. They're upset and many of them are in the business of upsetting us. George Wall, the Harvard biologist some years ago, described them as a generation in search of a future. Admittedly, there have been terrible failings along the way. The Christian church has often been remiss. The church's errors go back a long ways in the life of this republic. The church sanctioned slavery and then supported segregation. The church permitted war to develop into the largest national industry. The church has put a blessing on warfare when the divine dictum is unmistakably clear—"not by might nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord." The church has erred in so many ways, but I would take serious issue with those who would seek to lump or to park all of the feelings that the doorstep of the Christian church. The church is not alone in the arena of failure. The basic unit of society is not without error. It looks like the wellspring of civilization is almost dry and you know what that well spring is? It's the home, the family if you please and whenever home and church miss the mark, then you can begin to listen for the death rattle of civilization. Now there are some, there are many in this land who would attribute absolutely the present turmoil to the removal of prayer from the classroom and heaven knows that was a devastating blow—and I'm sure that the fallout effect of that will be around for generations to come, but to blame our failures exclusively on the removal of prayer from the classrooms is a little too simplistic. Some people say they took God out of the schools. Well, I did not appreciate the decision to take prayer from schools, but you know, and I know, that we dismissed God from the home long before he was taken out of the schools. If such a thing is really possible. When I look back on my own childhood, I remember with fond recollection the daily devotions in school, and it was not some mere exercise where we went through the motions. Because in those days, those who stood up to teach Monday through Friday were also in the Lord's house on Sunday morning—but when I look back on it, I must admit with all candor, that I never learned much about God in school. I received my real religious and spiritual training not in school but at home and in the church. I didn't learn how to love in school. I didn't learn basic lessons on self-respect and respect for others in school. I didn't learn that it paid to be honest in school. I didn't meet Jesus in school. All of these I acquired not in school, but at my mother's knee, at the family table and in the house of the Lord. That which is basic and fundamental begins long before a child knows what school is. That which is enduring starts not in the schoolhouse but at home. They tell us now that it begins even before birth. My daughter Beth is what they call an infant psychologist. I never heard of infant psychology until she got into it. I knew about child psychology but now they're talking about infant psychology and they're moving in the direction of prenatal psychology. They're saying now that you can bring influences to bear on an unborn life so that when the child gets here, certain things are already in order. We cannot weigh too lightly the influences of parents in the rearing of children—and I take issue with those who are caught up in the kind of sexless psychology. Those who would equate the roles of men and women in contemporary culture. I still believe that there's some fundamental differences between men and women, between fathers and mothers—and I believe that in the development of a child, a mother's guidance is profoundly significant. Do you agree with that? If we are to survive

the present rumblings and begin to try to develop a social order where decency and justice and mutual respect abide, mothers will have to assume what is tantamount to a prophetic role. It's been that way before. I'm afraid it's that way now. It happened in the long ago in the experience of Israel. The times were out of joint, justice was bankrupt, mercy was rare, oppression was commonplace, sorrow was everywhere, hope was on holiday, but a certain woman—a woman who resented things as they were and had a vision of things as they ought be, caught the vision, captured the spirit of the Lord, stood up to evil and snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. Her name was Deborah. Her description of life in her day is frighteningly close to life in our day but listen to Deborah as she paints the pain predicament of her time, “In the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, And the travellers walked through byways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, Until that I Deborah arose, That I arose a mother in Israel.” Highways unoccupied, the main thoroughfares were unsafe sort of like right now. People are afraid to leave home and oftentimes when they're away from home, they're afraid to return home. Human trafficking, it seems danger lurked at every bend in the road but says Deborah, “I arose a mother in Israel.” My what an up-to-date description, how applicable it is to us and especially to those who enjoy the status of being black mothers. No group of women on American soil has loved more deeply and suffered more severely. Can you forget the anguish and the tears of black mothers who had to stand by helplessly while their husbands and children were sold on slave auction blocks and separated never to be seen again? Can you dismiss from memory the pain of black mothers who slaved for massa in plantation kitchens while their men were lashed and beaten by massa's whip? Can you forget the hurt, the hurt of black mothers when night riders came and rode away with their sons to lynching situations? Can you forget can you forget the black wives of sharecroppers whose children attended school only when there was no work to be done in the fields? You ought not be able to forget. Some of you were victims of that situation. Can you dismiss the ravages of racism, the slaughter of warfare, the destruction by way of drugs and the miseducation of our children? And yet in the midst of so much hatred and abuse, black mothers, black women, God bless them, have been loving and caring anyhow. Some of them have loved their children almost to the point of being overprotective. I've heard young blacks, especially males, talk about the protective concern of their mothers. Growing up in racist culture, I had certain mothers tell their children, “stay in your place, don't argue with white folks, don't try to change things. Son, stay in your place.” They knew the violent character of the oppressor and in an attempt to protect, they in many instances crippled—and I'm sure that this is a factor in the rage that marks many black males today—but in spite of it all, the greatest symbol of love on the American sea is the black mother. And if the massive potential of the race is ever to flower and bloom, it will have to come as a result of the efforts of black mothers. Black mothers I reiterate, must arise, and assume a kind of prophetic function. There's an old adage which says the mother's heart is the child's school room and in the majority of cases as is the mother, so is the child. Given the present human order and given the death rattle of civilization and given the desolation and destruction of a body and soul, if I had my way, I would have every black mother get busy with some basic teachings. I would have her to tune in to Deborah's frequency and listen to Deborah as she gives some lessons out of her own experience. If I could, I would tell them to hear Deborah as she says, first of all my child, I want you to know that the universe is ultimately moral and spiritual. Child, I don't want you to be fooled by that which meets and greets your eyes. The society is immoral, but the universe is moral. We are victims of a wicked human order. Justice is still denied us, drug trafficked from the outside is destroying us. Society is immoral through and through, but the universe is moral, and child that's why truth crushed earth will rise again. And child, that's why the Bible can declare

without equivocation, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” That's why, that's why it can be declared by Lowell, “truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, but that scaffold sways the future and behind the dim unknown, standeth God within the shadows, keeping watch above his own.” The universe is moral and spiritual and translated into existential terms my child, it means that you're as good as anybody. My daughter you're as good as any girl, my son you're as good as any boy. Quality has nothing to do with pigmentation, be pleased with your birth. Thank God for your blackness and vow in deference to nobody. For child, the universe is ultimately moral and spiritual in character. What you see now will not obtain forever. For God is the God of justice and of judgment and he will bring everything to judgment. Secondly, I would have us listen in to Deborah as she gives another lesson. Says Deborah, regardless of the ugliness of humankind, life can be beautiful. God created a good world. Every time God created something he looked at it and declared it is good. It is absolutely impossible; it is a logical absurdity to conclude that a good God could make anything that was not good. Now meanness has made her march, but I think you ought to take heart in the fact that in spite of the long march of evil and meanness, evil and meanness have not triumphed. Which says that in spite of hardship, regardless of what is thrown in your pathway, irrespective of the hurdle, you are called to surmount. You can by God's grace triumph irrespective of oppression. You can be free. Life can be beautiful. It may seem that justice doesn't know your address, but you've got to stand in the strength of your personhood and say no to every big lie. Well, you may be tired and weary of the journey but whatever you do, don't give up but keep on stepping, press on, help your brothers and your sisters to overcome. Don't cringe in the face of evil for you are made in the image of God. Within you there is that which time cannot hurt and which even death cannot destroy. You are God's child. You're made in his image and saved by his grace and kept by his power and with the eternal present within, you can be somebody if you want to. If you have the will to do so, you can make it. And finally, if I could, I would cause all of us and especially our children to tune in again to Deborah's frequency and hear her say, In the third place, child, whatever happens in the living of your days don't forsake your religious heritage. Stay with God. Oh, what a checkered history is ours. We were snatched like animals from the shores of the motherland. We were sold, in some cases even by our African brothers and sisters, that's a matter of record. There can never be buyers without some sellers. Millions of us died during the awful ordeal of the middle passage and in this land and in other lands we have suffered every conceivable indignity. Nothing vile and vicious that's been inflicted on anybody has escaped us as a people. Our fathers were brutalized, our mothers were raped, our children have been demeaned, but I hear Deborah say, it's true my child, that all of these have happened—and there is some truth in the assertion that the white man introduced you to the bible—but don't buy that wholesale. He introduced you to his interpretation of the Bible. For while he was running around in caves in Europe, your fathers were doing theology on the continent of Africa. Don't forget men like Augustine, and _____?? and great fathers of the church. Don't swallow the line that this is the white man's religion. This thing predates western civilization. In order to understand it you've got to go back, way back, back to the fertile crescent of Mesopotamia and come on down the river Nile and spend a little time in Egypt—and stop off in Timbuktu. Oh, we didn't have a lot of knowledge as slaves. We couldn't read too well but God gave us special insight and we took the Bible and gave it a utilitarian twist. We read it with spiritual insight and we began to see through the white man's sin and we discovered that in spite of all the negative things that they said about us, that we were a special people made in the likeness of God himself—and we learned about Jesus and Jesus told us that we were somebody—and we started talking to him and we heard him say if

the son sets you free, you're free indeed—and we started getting on our knees and praying to God. We learned how to steal away and have a little talk with the Lord. We learned to sing in cryptic language. We sang songs that only the captives could understand. The slave masters didn't understand our singing. They were not accustomed to our music, and they didn't know what we were talking about when we sang, “sometimes I feel like a motherless child a long ways from home” but we kept on singing. I'm so glad trouble don't last. Always we kept all singing. There's a bright side somewhere, don't you rest until you find it. There's a bright side somewhere. We looked at white evil and sang, “everybody talking about heaven, that ain't going there.” Yes Lord—and when I wrote got really rough, we sang, “swing low, sweet chariot. Coming for to carry me home,” and then in the deep dark of the night down in the brush of us we sang, “I'm going home on the morning train, evening train may be too late. I'm going home on the morning train.” I tell you today our house is a great legacy. God's been good to us. He's given us praying mothers, mothers who knew that a little talk with Jesus makes things right. Yes! Yes! And by God's grace we've kept on stepping. And the same God that took care of mama, the same God that helped daddy to provide for us is the same God who wants to bless us right now. He's our hope for tomorrow. He's our joy when we are in sorrow, he's our bridge on troubled waters. Yes! Yes! Do you know it? Have you tried it? Do you trust him? He's all right, yes! By God's grace, by God's grace, wrong cannot ultimately win and that's enough to shout about. Give God the glory in spite of everything that is contrary to what ought be. Take a little time to give God the glory and he'll give you power that you never knew of. He'll put something in you that nobody can destroy. Do I have a witness? Yes! Hallelujah! The doors of the church are open. Anybody here today who wants to say, “I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. I accept him as Lord of my life and I want to love him and serve him and honor him the balance of my days?” If that's your decision, we bid you come while we sing the hymn of invitation. And if by chance there are persons present who live in the city, who know the Christ, but have no church home, we want to invite you to come as we sing selection 220, “God Will Take Care Of You.” I've been hearing that all of my life. I heard that before I heard the song. This was one of the theme songs of our mothers. God will take care of you, oh yeah, oh yes! I remember when I got ready to go to college, went down to board the train headed for college. First time to go away on my own for any length of time and my mother slipped a little envelope into my pocket she said, “I want you to read it on the train.” And she wrote in the head she told me about how blessed I was that I had an opportunity that every young fella didn't have and she went on to tell me to use my time wisely but when she came to the end, she said it's one thing I want you to always remember said, “when, when, when your load gets heavy and when it appears that your wagon is about to break down, I want you to just remember that God will take care of you.” And he will! Yes! He will! Do I have a witness? The Lord will take care of his own. The doors of the church are open. Let us stand and sing to the glory of our Christ. Whoever you are, whatever your condition, we warmly bid you come and unite with Christ and this church. Jesus is calling, come to Jesus. Somebody knows what I'm talking about. I know I've got a witness in this house. God will! God will! God will! God will! Won't he? Yes, he will!

(choir and congregation sing “God Will Take Care Of You”)

JONES: God will! Jesus is calling. God bless. God will! Who else will come?