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SPEAKER #1: Oh, come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker.

(organ plays and choir sings two songs)

SPEAKER #1: Let us now unite our hearts in the spirit of prayer. Our father and our God, we thank thee for this another privilege of assembling ourselves together within these hallowed walls. We thank you for your continuing blessings upon us, unworthy though we are. We've come now to receive a deep sense of the holy presence in our midst. For this is your house and we have come to worship your name. We pray our father, that you will allow us to remove all those things from our minds that will prevent us from worshiping thee as we ought. Let us now lay aside every weight that does so easily beset us and let us see thee and thee only. We thank you, our father, for this, another week's journey—and you've been mighty good to us. Far better to us than we've been to ourselves, and we feel God as we endeavor to worship thee in spirit and in truth, that your holy presence might move from heart to heart and from mind to mind, yea even from breast to breast and we'll come out father not on the form and not on the fashion, but we have come to praise your holy name for thou alone are worthy to be praised. We pray Lord that you will hear our individual petitions and our collective prayers if thou wilt. We ask oh God, that you will continue to bless our pastor as he come forth to speak out of your holy word once again and that you might strengthen him where the strength is needed oh, God and give him vision wherever vision is needed and empower him with thy spirit as he speaks on your holy word. Bless everyone who is in the sound of my voice in this holy house of prayer today and we'll be careful to give you a name to praise the honor and the glory. For thou alone are worthy to be praised. We ask it all in the name of your son, Christ Jesus, our Lord, it is in this blessed name that we pray.

(choir sings “We Have Come Into His House”)

SPEAKER #1: I remain standing as you usher in the worshipers. Let us now sing the hymn of praise number 409, “O, Zion Haste,” selection 409.

(choir and congregation sing “O, Zion Haste” and “He Is Worthy To Be Praised”)

SPEAKER #1: Will all persons who are visiting with us kindly stand at this time that we might acknowledge your presence? Will those persons who are visiting with us today kindly stand and kindly remain standing through our thank you and kindly remain standing if you will, all persons that are visitors, that we might acknowledge your presence, thank you, thank you. The reason that we wanted you to remain standing is because we wish to greet each one of you personally. We

take delight always here at Bethany, welcoming visitors to our services. We're well aware of the fact that there are many other houses of worship to which you could have gone, but we're thankful that the spirit sent you our way today. So, on behalf of our pastor, Dr. William Augustus Jones, and Bethany Church at large, we're delighted to have you to worship with us and we trust that as soon as you find it possible and convenient, that you'll come back again and worship with us here at Bethany church. We're now going to ask the Bethlehem family if you would kindly stand, for it is fellowship time here at Bethany church.

(music begins playing and congregation chatters)

SPEAKER #2: Giving honor to God, to Dr. Jones, Reverend Peyton [phonetic], Reverend Wilson, _____ ?? Associates, officers, members and friends, good morning (congregation responds "Good Morning!") Sunday, April 27th is Women's Day. My job this morning is to call all women to come and get involved. This year's theme is *Bethany Women, Lights in a Dark World*, based on the scripture from Second Corinthians, chapter four, verse six. Our chairwoman is Glenna Elcott [phonetic], the co-chairwoman is Linda Dandridge [phonetic]. These women, along with the various captains have already begun to work towards our goal of 50,000 dollars. The activities were kicked off on February 15th with the Women's Day Tea. On April 12, in the morning, there will be a walk-a-thon followed in the afternoon with an international bazaar, then on April 26, the women's day retreat will rejuvenate us for Women's Day proper. Will the captains please stand? The Women's Day captains. These women, who are letting their lights shine so brightly will be reaching out to all of you who have not gotten involved in the preparation. There is still plenty to do and plenty of time to lend a hand. All women are asked to give 250 dollars or whatever your heart leads you to give. Dr. Jones as always, is the captain for the men. April 27th is your day women of Bethany, to let your light shine for Christ. Thank you.

SPEAKER #3: Dr. Jones, pastoral staff, my Bethany family, and friends' good morning. My name is Mark Mcrary [phonetic], and I am one of the many young adults here at Bethany Baptist church and on behalf of the young adult fellowship it is my privilege and honor to invite all of you to Young Adult Day at Bethany on Sunday March 23rd, 2003. Young Adult day at Bethany is a day when young adults, which is a fellowship comprising members of Bethany between the ages of 20 and 40 host the 8 o'clock as well as the 11 o'clock service. Our theme this year is, *Young Adults, Standing Strong in the Storm*. Our guest preacher will be licentiate Lamont Jones, who hails from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Immediately following the 11 o'clock service, the young adults will be hosting a festive fellowship reception and all of you are graciously invited. Young Adult Day has been a tradition at Bethany for several years standing and this year's event promises to be a festive and spiritually filled fellowship which I assure you, will not be soon forgotten in the recesses of your memories. Do feel free to bring a guest or two as all of you are cordially invited to worship with us on that day, thank you.

SPEAKER #1: In that connection, the young adults will rehearse on Tuesday and on Thursday at 7:30. Sister Natalie Meyers, we are having a note from her in that regard. We have several thank you cards coming to us. We wish to thank our Bethany family for their kindness words and words of comfort and continued support. Please keep us in your prayers. Yours in Christ. Reverend and Mrs. Walter Wilson and Reverend Wilson sharing the pulpit with us this morning. That you know

he recently lost his mother. Let us continue to remember him and his family in our prayers. We also learned just this morning that sister Gretchen Bellamy's brother died in (recording cuts off and music plays)

REV. DR. WILLIAM AUGUSTUS JONES, JR: My message at this hour is titled, *A Word for the Weary*, and I know that since weariness attends every one of us, I'm walking down every street that's represented here today. I lift up verses 3 and 4 from chapter 46 of the Book of Isaiah and I'm using the Living Bible Transliteration. Clear, lucid transliteration of the original text. Here's what it says, "I have created you and cared for you since you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime even when your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you. I will carry you along and be your savior." A word for the weary. There's a certain cry that has been heard from people in pilgrimage since the very beginning of the initial estrangement. It is a cry of painful anguish and poignant affliction. It reaches up to God from the brick fields of Egypt, the rivers of Babylon, the cotton fields of Dixie and the gruesome ghettos of the world's chief cities. At times it's a mournful sigh, at times it's an inaudible wailing. Sometimes it's a scream of acute agony and then at other times it is great weeping in the deep dark of a long night. It is a cry of horror, but it bears on its wings an accent of hope. I have heard it all over this world. All the way from Boston to Bombay, from London to Lagos, from Moscow to Manila. Wherever the curse is found, the cry is heard. It says in symbol if not in substance, "Oh Lord, how long? How long will the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? How long will evil march unchecked and unhalting? How long will tyranny reign with heart of stone and fist of iron? Oh Lord, how long? How long will justice be jammed and languish at the gate? How long will mercy be mistreated? How long before righteousness reigns without arrival? Oh Lord, how long?" This mournful lament bespeaks our burden both past and present. For who is there among us that does not feel a certain pinch of pain resulting from years of unrealized hopes? I dare say that every one of us old and young alike can go to the museum of memories and leave with a chronicle of unfinished business—and those of us who've been traveling for any time and are already fully qualified to sing our father's song. I'm tired, my soul needs resting and those whose journey is approaching the setting sun echoed that elegy of old—I've been in the storm so long. Khalil Gibran, the Lebanese mystic asked in one of his musings, "Are you one who was born in the cradle of sorrow and reared in the lap of misfortune and in the house of oppression? Are you eating a dry crust moistened with tears? Are you drinking the turbid waters in which are mingled blood and tears?" To that trilogy of questions, you and I would have to answer, "yes" For pain has been our portion and languishment has been our lot. Not for just a little while but for a long time—and I have learned my friends, that it is the length of agony—not the depth, but the length that makes for the weariness. The most troublesome question in the classroom of affliction is not why, but how long. There was a time when people of faith asked "why?" Perhaps we have matured in some ways with respect to our relationship with God. For now, the prevailing question is not why, but how long? It's not the depths of distress that makes for weariness. It's the duration thereof. If I'm caught in the throes of pain and perplexity, I want to believe that my suffering will be temporary and transitory, but if it lingers. If it stretches out, if it appears terminal then weariness possesses my very soul and I'm forced to cry out, "oh Lord, how long?" The Bible is not silent on the subject. The blessed book deals in decisive manner with the problem of weariness, this problem of existential loneliness—and if you read it closely and carefully you will discover some directional signs at the crossroads called crisis. There came a time during the Babylonian captivity when weariness plagued the people of God like a sweeping prairie fire. Faith shifted to fatalism, courage changed to cynicism, hope went on holiday, feelings

of divine desertion got a foothold among the faithful. They could no longer sing the Lord's song. Tyrannical rule had broken their spirits and shattered their dreams. The old timers wept when they remembered Zion. Half a century of stark servitude dimmed all hopes of deliverance and restoration. In a word, life lost its sweetness. An acidic attitude developed and that's the way it is when the struggle is long and tough and tedious. To be quite frank, that's our present predicament as a people. We have toiled so long that we are tired of our tiredness, we are weary of our weariness. Lord, help me to preach today. And we've been toiling and struggling for such a long time at public forums and on public platforms, on radio and television. I along with others have sought across the years to state the case of our people. I have assailed bigots. I have confronted racists head on with all the strength of my soul I have tried to lift up the sins of this nation for serious scrutiny—but in all candor, I must admit that in quiet moments of personal aloneness, I've had to reckon with the sins and the shortcomings of my own people. I've been forced to face the folly of many black people. Now I fully understand the historical consequences of slavery and segregation. I understand clearly what oppression can do to the psyche of a people, but I also know what a profound spirituality at work can do and what it can do in significant measure among any people. Now somebody may unjustly put you down and even kick you in the face but if you get yourself together with God, nobody can hold you down. You may be battered and bruised and broken but if the fire of divine sonship burns in your soul, you'll get up you'll stand up and you'll stay up.

Babylon with all of its meanness could not put out the fire of spiritual devotion. Most of the Israelites did give up but all of them did not give up. For most of them the long years of captivity produced a case of weighty weariness and when it gets like that hope is lost and the future seems devoid of meaning. When you give up, Lord have mercy, before you give out—you're already a goner. You have died without dying. There's no faith to be fired, no hope to kindle, no song to sing, not even a prayer to pray. God is left with almost nothing to work with. I say most of them gave up but not all of them. There was a remnant a faithful few. A prayer man who held on in spite of. Now they too were weary, but it was weariness with wings. It was sorrow touched by sweetness. Some of them saw purpose in their pain. A thread of peace ran through the fabric of their perplexity and this remnant, this little man who refused to stop believing just knew that somehow God was putting it all together. In the midst of dismay, devotion continued, a certain ecstasy over arch their agony and while the cynical crowd among them was saying farewell to faith—the little prayer man was singing, thee that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” It doesn't matter how desolate the day, nor how deep the darkness. Believe me when I tell you, God never leaves himself without a witness—and that clearly is one of the wonders of the world. In every climb and in every circumstance, no matter how weary the victims—God will have a witness.

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recording of cassette tape 1, side 2 begins

JONES: By the rivers of Babylon, his chief witness was a slave preacher. And in the presence of a weariness that wept, Isaiah the slave preacher-prophet kept his ear attuned to the music of eternity. Tennyson, in one of his poems, talks about the mighty hopes that make us men. Isaiah courted a mighty hope. He dreamt the larger dream though wherein warn himself, he conversed with God. He stayed in touch with the father's house where central is never busy. Now, his

willingness differed from that of the people—not in degree but in kind. He was the leader, the shepherd, the pastor of the prayer man. He was God's man in a difficult situation and believe me nobody catches the flack like the one who has to explain the ways of God to men in a weary, worn, world situation. Isaiah had to deal with difficult questions. “Where is God?” they asked. “Is God disinterested? Is he too busy with other matters?” Were the deists correct when they said that God wound up the world like a clock and then left it to run on its own. The preacher needed a word for the weary and thank God, God gave it. The message was a two-prong promise. One political and one personal. The public, political promise was shrouded in symbolism. It was covered with cryptic language. It was a coded message, and every believer ought to be acquainted with some aspects of language where you can get your message to the right people without the wrong people picking up on it. Hear me today. God said, “now Isaiah, you're dealing with wicked men in Babylon. They're inhuman, they're insensitive, they are oblivious to the heartbeat of history, they do not respect me, they are opposed to your freedom and your future. So, Isaiah, you have to be cautious when you communicate. When you talk to the faithful, don't be too direct. Speak in a way that only the saints will understand.” Oh, there is a language that the wicked do not know. There is a speech that foul folks cannot fathom. It is the language of a peculiar faith that speaks with an infinite accent. Our slave forparents knew this and they knew it well. God gave to them a language all their own. In the fields of Dixie, they sometimes sang, “steal away, steal away to Jesus. I ain't got long to stay here.” That was a signal song which said to others there's going to be a meeting tonight down in the brush arbor, a meeting tonight—and the next morning the house slaves would convey a message to those who worked in the field a message which let them know what was happening at the big house among massa and missus. While they were praying and singing in the deep of the night, they would start singing up in the big house so that somebody could pick up on it and carry it to the field slaves. They'd start singing, “way down yonder, by myself couldn't hear nobody praying” and that meant that all was clear. That that big house crowd didn't know what had been happening the night before and then they also sang, “I'm Going Home on the Morning Train,” that signified that the underground railroad was getting ready to operate. Without a train or a track in sight, “I'm going home on the morning train. Evening train may be too late, I'm going home on the morning train.” Oh God will speak to the weary. Even to you if you will let him. So, God said, “Isaiah, when you preach today, I want you to make the message short, succinct, and cryptic. Concerning the political question, this is what I want you to tell the faithful, Bel boweth, Nebo stoopeth. That was symbolic language. When he preached, he was really saying Belshazzar must bow, Nebuchadnezzar has to stoop. In a word, Babylon will fall. The kingdom will collapse. God spoke it, Isaiah said it, the faithful believed it. That was an encouraging word for an enslaved people. The route of the wicked was promised. The hand of oppression would be lifted, and I hear the same word in the present order. All around the world we've been affected and afflicted by a damnable marriage of reactionary politics and right-wing religion. But today I hear footfalls of one from eternity. God is marching and the nations must tremble, and my soul rejoices in the judgment of the Lord, but captives then and now are more than political creatures. We are much more than subjects of human society. So, then God speaks not only to political needs he also speaks to personal problems. You'd better hear me today. That is not how he deals with bad Babylon or with wicked Washington. God is obligated to deal with me as a real person created in his image. So, you see there's something in me that reaches out beyond the bounds of culture and empire. I'm of the sod but there's some sky in me. I come from the dust, but there is in Shakespearean jargon, a divinity that shapes my end. I've got an eternal spirit within this house of clay and sometimes my soul gets weary. Yeah, I've got a soul and my soul gets tired. Isaiah, I need for you to speak to the

soul. What does God have to say to us as persons, persons created in the divine image? “Prophet, do you have a word for weary souls?” and the prophet answers, “of course, yes, I do. I have a word. Lord said to me, ‘tell all who are left, not many left, just a few are left but tell all who are left, I have created you and cared for you since you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime even when your hair is white with age. I will carry you along and be your savior.’” Now the political world is a good word for the faithful. It's good to know that the wicked will not win. I'm pleased to know that evil cannot endure. I'm happy to know that tyranny cannot finally triumph. I'm glad to know that God's got his eye on every pharaoh and that judgment is real. It suits my heart to know that God's gonna move this wicked race and raise up a nation that shall obey. That's a mighty good word is it not? Oh yeah, the political word is a good word, but the personal word is an even better word. For it assures me that no matter what troubles me and that come what will or may, come hell or high water, God is concerned about me. God cares for me. Gods got his arms around me; he has a word for my weariness and for your weariness. When I am cast down in spirit and soul, he whispers sweet peace to me—but in order to hear his whisper and in order to feel his touch, you've got to belong to those who are left. You've got to be among the few that pray. You've got to hold on in spite of. You've got to be in that number who's saying, “I'm going through.” To receive this word, you've got to know that it's better to run to God than it is to run from God. You see that's the real difference between the garden of Eden and the garden of Gethsemane. In Eden, the first Adam tried to run from God but in Gethsemane, Jesus the second, Adam, ran to God. Father if it be possible remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. I'd rather have my Gethsemanes and tell God about them. I'd rather be in position to say, “Father I stretch my hand to thee. No other helper I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me with earth shall I go” and if I work with him, he'll work with me and together we'll work it out. Yes! Hallelujah yes! Now admittedly, my brothers and my sisters, it's a tough and terrible time for faithful pilgrims. It's the age of anything. Synthetic values, degenerate democracy, fallacious freedom, little genuine morality, false values, wickedness in high places, lukewarm churches, pharisaic religion, spineless preachers, a peaceless world, violence everywhere and at the domestic level you got all the time break-ins and robberies and muggings and murders and rapes and addicts everywhere. In a word, hell is on the loose, but I remind you God has the word. A word for the weary. The God I serve has the word. Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine hearts; wait, I say, on the Lord. God has a word. Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. God has a word. Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. God has the word. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path. I tell you again, God has a word. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, and I'll take his word. I believe his word. I trust his word. His word have I hid in my heart. I may be weary on the outside, but I'm calm on the inside. For you see there's something within me that hold it the reins, something within me that banishes pain, something within me I cannot explain. All that I know, there's something within. Admittedly things can get tough, and the road will get rougher but I'm willing to wait on the Lord. Like Job in the midst of his affliction. All the days of my appointed time. I'll wait till my change comes. For you see I trust in God, and I know that he cares for me. No one else can speak to the soul and I know of no other friend like Jesus. Have you discovered what it is to walk with the master? I've learned in our walk together to be not dismayed. Whatever tide, God will take care of you. I've learned to beneath his wings of love abide. God will take care of you. Two days of toil when heart does feel God will, yes, he will. I know he will. God will take care of you and when danger is fierce, your path is sailed. God will!

Any your witnesses in this house? God will take care of you. All you may need, he will provide. God will take care of you. Nothing you ask will be denied. God will! Wish I had a praying church. God will take care of you, and I like that final line in this grand old hymn, no matter what may be the test. God will take care of you. Lean weary one upon his breast. God will take care of you. God will! God will! God will! Yes! Sure, enough he will! God, the God I serve, is able. If he can send out the stars on a nightly basis to shine, twinkle and stand sentinel, if he can cause the moon to lift her veil like a bride adorned for her husband, if God can cause the sun to make its golden sweep from the east to the west, if God can cause ten thousand worlds to move and revolve without any hint of collision, surely, surely. If God knows every sparrow that falleth to the ground. Surely! Surely! Yes, surely! I said Surely, God will take care of you. Do you believe it? Do you trust him? I mean sure enough trust him. Are you counting on him? Do you depend on him? Yes! Oh yes! I'm feeling pretty good. For I'm talking out of my own soul. I know what the Lord can do. I know what the Lord will do. Some of you are sitting there looking at me like you don't know what I'm talking about. Well, I serve warning on you, you'd better try to learn what I'm talking about because the day will come when you'll surely need the Lord. Yes, you will! I know you will! Yes! Oh, yes! And if you love him and serve him as best you can, he'll come see about you. I don't care how difficult the situation may be, he will show up and he'll show up right on time. He's an on-time God. Isn't that, right? I'm talking to the faithful now. I'm talking to people who know the Lord, been here a long time. God, he may not come just when you want him, but he's always right on time. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Yes!

I'm quitting but I don't want to quit. I'm quitting solely for your sake, but I dare you to take God seriously, to believe his word and trust his grace and count on what's in this book and say "Lord, whatever you tell me I'm going to give of my best in order to abide by." Trust in the Lord and do good and then stand back and watch him work. Nobody can work like him. Well, if you don't believe it, talk with Moses down by the Red Sea. If you don't believe it, talk with Daniel in that lion's den that became his den. If you still don't believe it, talk with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were in that furnace, and somebody said that the reason they didn't burn up was because God air-conditioned the furnace. No, that wasn't the reason. The reason they didn't burn was because the pre-existent Christ was in the furnace with them. He was right there in the fire, and he'll be in your fire. Yes! A little girl was asked by her Sunday school teacher, "what happened to that fourth figure?" Talking about Jesus in the fire, "what happened to him?" and very wisely the little girl answered, "well, he's still in the fire." Hallelujah yes! I know he walks with me in my fire. I don't care how hot it gets. I don't care how the flames leap up. He'll be with you even in the fire. Through fire and through flood he's promised to go with you all the way. Yes! There's a word for the weary. Do you have it is it snuggled in your heart? When you go to bed tonight will it be all right with your soul? Yes! Yes! Well, well, well, I'm so glad I know him. I'm glad that he knows me. I'm glad that we make good company together. Oh, you ought to get as close to him as heaven will allow. Believe his word and follow him faithfully. "I have cared for you since you were born. All the way from the womb to wherever you are. I created you and I've cared for you since you were born, I will be your God throughout your lifetime even when your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you. I will carry you along and be your savior." Hallelujah! Praise be the God! The doors of the church are open. Somebody ought to receive him as Lord this morning. Somebody ought to come as we sing the hymn of invitation and present your total life to the Lord of history. Jesus Christ, the son of the living God. Can we turn into hymnal selection 220? "God Will Take Care of You," 220. Somebody sitting before me right now, never thought that

they would still be here. You thought that you were about to be cut off a long time ago and here you are sitting with the faithful on another Lord's day morning. Whatever you do, don't take God in his goodness for granted. He doesn't need you to fulfill his purposes, but heaven knows you need him. And if there's anybody present who lives in this city but without church home, you know Christ is Lord, we invite you to come and unite with this fellowship. Selection 220. Let stand and lift it to the glory of Christ.

(choir and congregation begin singing "God Will Take Care of You")

JONES: (speaking over the singing) Who will come? Jesus is calling. Somebody ought to come. Come while you have this opportunity. The master is calling.

Those of you who are still in pews, take the hand of the person standing next to you. We want to talk to God for just a little while. Our father, since you know all that there is to know about every one of us, your servant doesn't come to you at this time with a long petition. Since you know us from the inside out and since you're acquainted with every step we take, I'm just going to ask you to do one thing today. There are people here representing all kinds of situations. Some on behalf of loved ones, some behalf of friends, some on behalf of themselves. Cancer is here, strokes, past and impending are here. Heart trouble is here. Heartbreak and heartache are both here. Indecision because of doubts about tomorrow. (recording cuts out briefly and starts again) We go down from this worship on that note, our father every one of us to know every waking moment of every day that you've promised to take care of yours, so we leave with that assurance, and we are counting on you to keep your word. In Jesus' name. Let everybody say in Jesus' name. In Jesus' name! Amen and thank God.

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