

August 21, 2011
First Baptist Church; Pittsburg CA
Genesis 7:13-16
Get Aboard, It's Going to Rain

In 2006, one year after the destructive reality of Hurricane Katrina, Vice President Al Gore released his landmark documentary entitled "An Inconvenient Truth." In this documentary he spoke of the very high rates of CO₂ or (Carbon Dioxide) that have been continuously emitted into the atmosphere by the process of transforming fossil remains into fuel. Gore talked about how these pollutants are being trapped in our atmosphere and how they are causing our planet to heat at devastating rates. Some of the effects of this over heating are, among other things, the loss of much of the polar ice caps, the rising of sea levels, the dissipation of fresh water, and the death of the Polar Bears. In short, they postulate Environmental Catastrophe!

Yes, I am saying that because of global warming, hurricanes are harsher, tsunamis are more severe, and tornadoes are more torrential. I am saying that, because of irresponsible industry, sweetshop mentalities, and the concentration of waste and factories in lower-income communities, that pollution is not only killing the Polar Bear, but pollution is now killing your cousin Pukie!

Environmentalism can no longer be a conversation solely for the rich and affluent. A polluted environment is the reason you see that mama is dying of cancer, daddy is dying of high blood pressure, and the baby is suffering with asthma. In 2011, one of the most pertinent questions of the day is how do we survive environmental catastrophe?

As we come into the realm of our story we find Noah preaching the same sermon that I'm preaching this morning. *Get on Board, it's going to rain!* He preaches it for two hundred years but just a few get on board. In God's own time the Bible says that the rain came and God himself closed the door as the ark began its trek to safety. Only the people on the ship survived the storm.

I've got one point this morning and then I'll take my seat. Beloved I want to report to you this morning that Noah survived because he **Paid attention, and heard God speak!** Genesis 6:9 says that Noah walked with God. How many of us have lived long enough to know that you can make it through anything if you learn how to walk with God. I submit to you that the reason that Noah's family survived was that while all others were laying and playing, while all others were getting and gaining, Noah could be found silent in the still hours of the night, listening for the very move of God.

Have you ever noticed that in the midst of inclement weather that animals have already taken refuge? I was told that when the

tsunami hit Asia a few months ago that nobody had to go back to the beach and get the animals. The animals were already on high ground. They were paying attention.

I remember when I was in High School, Eric Burns and I went to the Oakland Coliseum for our first concert. No this was not the 70's when Parliament Funk-a-delic landed for the first time, this was the 80's and we went to see Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five, we went to see the Beastie Boys from Boston and the Fat Boys from New York. Sheila E. was on the floor with us wearing white lace as we all swayed to the beat of Houdini, *"Friends how many of us have them. Friends, ones we can depend on, Friends before we go any further let's be friends."*

At any rate as the night got late I was paying attention to the stage, but my boy Eric was paying attention to the crowd and looked at me in a strong tone and said come on man it's time to go! I said man, what's wrong with you, go where? Don't you see all of this going on? Eric looked at me, as if to say, man you ain't paying attention. I see the negroes on stage but don't you see the negroes from Funk Town, Ghost Town, 69th Village, and Sabrani Park, all under the same roof. Now come on man, let's go! We got out of there and heard about the fight the next morning because Eric was paying attention. He heard God speak.

Come on somebody, there was a time in our communities when we didn't even need meteorologist, If you wanted to know if it was going to rain or snow all you had to do was ask Big Mama what her arthritis and rheumatism had to say about it. When the storm broke out, we use to turn off everything in the house and sit ourselves down somewhere because we understood that God was moving. We paid attention and we heard God speak.

When it comes to environmental catastrophe, I believe that the church ought to be intent and purposeful about hearing God speak. Church, I come today on a mission to green the Black church and as a part of that I really want to admonish you to develop a Green Team whose ministry it is to always hear what God is saying regarding our environment. I'm campaigning this year for the development of a Green Team in each Black church so that we are not left behind in this international push to save souls and to save the planet on which those souls dwell. I am here this morning begging us as a people to slow down, to pay attention and to hear God speak! Oh this ain't no new fangled theology for Americans.

That's how we survived the middle passage,
we heard God speak
That's how we survived 400 years of chattel slavery,
we heard God speak,
That's how we survived the great depression,
we heard God speak,
That's how we survived the housing crash,
we heard God speak,

That's how we are surviving this present recession,
we came to church this morning in order to hear God speak!

Church get on board, it's going to rain. Beloved, if we are going to avert environmental catastrophe, we as a church are going to have to set the example. It is imperative that we begin green teams in our churches to study solutions in clean energy, urban agriculture, water availability, transportation, and energy efficiency. We as a people must learn to eat better foods. Church, get on Board. It's going to rain.

Our churches ought to run more efficiently. Our water bills, our energy bills, and our garbage bills ought to go down at church, and our families should follow suit. I am saying that the church ought to set the example for the home. We have to get serious about recycling and weatherization, and we must invest in clean energy ideas that we get from other churches.

Our new moderator, the Rev. Calvin Jones and The Providence Baptist Church of S.F. became one of the first Black churches to install Solar Panels on their roof a few years ago! Lowering their-own energy cost and selling energy back to their local energy grid. We must learn to use what we have in our hands and to set the example for the people of God.

Oh yes, the word is, beloved, that the world is facing environmental catastrophe. It may not come today and it may not come tomorrow, but believe you me, if we continue to live how we are living--as if

we have infinite resources, and as if we can use this world up and find another one to live on, then we are in for a rude awakening. The reality is that the church has always been for us, the major agent for community change, but our children are at the present learning more about creation care in the public school systems, than what we are teaching them in church. Young folks are learning about the green movement through organizations like the Hip Hoop Caucus, and Green for All. They're learning about it at Drake concerts and on the Disney channel.

All of that is fine and good, but the reality is that stewardship of God's earth is a spiritual conversation. Gen. 1:26 says that God gave us dominion! This is a God conversation, and if our people are truly going to move from a dirty energy economy to a clean energy economy, if our people are going to strive in a green collar economy, one that creates jobs that are pathways out of poverty then the church must set the example and the church must lead the way. Get on Board church, it's going to rain.