



It's Time to Rise!

By Pastor Haywood A. Robinson, III

Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. Joshua 1:2

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them. Joshua 3:6



Forty years ago, The Reverend Thomas J. Baltimore heard God's call to RISE and he answered. Comfortably serving in Steelton, Pennsylvania, "T.J.," as he was affectionately known, obediently transitioned to Montgomery County, Maryland, where he organized and established this congregation. Here, he led the first public worship service on Sunday, August 5, 1978, at John F. Kennedy High School.

How wonderful it is to celebrate four decades of uninterrupted witness to and worship of Christ throughout our community, nation and world.

Our theme, taken from Joshua 1, essentially is about succession planning, a principle both illustrated and commended throughout Scripture. From Paradise to Patmos, even until this present day, God has strategically ensured the continual unfolding of His eternal plan from generation to generation.

Solomon wrote, "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Each of us has but a "season" within which to fulfill our Kingdom purpose. Within that "time," we are to equip and empower those who will carry on His work in their season. We must provide them with the necessary expectations, examples, education, experiences and encouragement.

So, *It's Time to RISE* is a Call for Appreciation of those who preceded us, who paved ways and provided resources for us (1:2, 7). This includes Pastor Baltimore, his family and all of those who embraced his vision.

It's Time to RISE is a Call to Attention. While God's plan for us remains constant, the landscape changes with each successive generation. New opposition, obstacles and opportunities present themselves and demand that we "stay woke" as the baton is passed (1:5, 8).

It's Time to RISE is a Call to Accommodation. Shifts in culture, community, climate and communications always demand an acknowledgment of and adjustment to "new normals." Empowering those whom we are discipling requires making room for new methodologies and modalities aimed at fulfilling the same global mission and delivering the same gospel message.

It's Time to RISE is a Call to Action. A new generation of people had emerged by the time Joshua assumed leadership. God was calling them to take action, i.e., to move forward by faith. Likewise, today we celebrate advancement, but not arrival. God still is calling us to faithfully follow Him forward (1:2-18).

It's Time to RISE is a Call for Affirmation of God's relentless and reliable commitment to us amid the changes in leadership and landscape brought on over time (1:5). It's also a call to convey to the emerging church our confidence in their capacity and commitment to contend for the faith.

It's Time to RISE is a Call to Anticipation. How pointless it is to equip and empower others with no expectation of God doing a new thing through them. Throughout this celebration, we have taken time to glance back, but we gaze ahead, with high expectation of God's fulfillment of His Word and work in us and through us.

Here's the harsh reality played out over the millennia: "Ready or Not, It's Time to RISE!" So, let's resolve to be ready. Let's Equip and Empower the Next Generation for Kingdom advancement.

Happy Anniversary!!!