Let’s Save All Our Children

Chapter

12

A National Kitchen Table Summit: From desperation, to jubilation! An invitation and a summons: Your presence is required.

In spite of a perception that our American society never had it so good, there is a gnawing reality that reminds us, with countless agonizing tragedies of death at too early an age, both in the inner city and the outer cities of our land, that maybe we have never had it so bad as we do now. With major Columbine-High-School-type tragedies so long lasting in our memory, and as we gear up for each season, we must remind ourselves that we cannot, and we dare not go back to business as usual. Let’s save all our children, the children of the rich, and the children of the poor!

The black church under King knew how to help the biblical as well as the contemporary character types, such as rich Zacchaeus, save their own grandchildren. Equally, King showed us how to save our own, the children of our churches and communities. This, we must relearn, and do it right away, and join together as a global world house family, in undertaking this major challenge.

To that end, our communities must undertake an urgent inquiry into healing the soul of our troubled society.

One way to frame the general question is: What are some key national and local strategies for healing the soul of a suffering society so that homes and schools can become beloved learning communities, and not incubators of inner city Jail Trails, or outer city death traps? Our children are crying, and we must find better answers, and right away. Let us lay aside our ordinary pursuits, and pursue what is now most real for all of us.

This general question must be engaged, and rigorously embraced soon and very soon. It must be done through what Dr. Russ Quaglia, of the Global Center for Student Aspirations, defines as the need, not for a national White House, but a National Kitchen Table Summit, taking place in every home and school, in every parish, synagogue, and mosque, in the State House and the White House. As quietly as is kept, that was King’s big secret. Then and now, the question we all would like to chew on together is: What do we want to be and become, as a family, a nation, or as a world house family?

Remember King at the kitchen table back in Montgomery, on that fateful night in December 1955, when fear tempted him to turn back from Rosa Park’s dream–and his own. That very week highlighted once again, the oppression felt daily by Montgomery, Alabama’s Negro citizens. Mrs. Rosa Parks had just struck her blow for freedom–her own, and ours–although at that point, few people knew it. Mrs. Parks did! And the ball was passed to the new young preacher in town, named Rev. King.

What God had in mind for Montgomery–although even King is not remembered as having used the term–was a “grand jubilee.” Back there, at that point, only the vision of jubilee existed in the mind and heart of God, and hints of it, in Mrs. Park’s soul, otherwise, why would she have done such a daring thing, which conceivably could have cost her, her very life.

The sense of oppressiveness and desperation that fell over Montgomery, and the entire South at that time, was very much like the sense of chaos and oppressiveness that has settled, like a dark cloud, all over modern day America, and the world. Oppression can be caused by the hate or insensitivity of others, or it can be generated as a kind of self-hatred and self-oppression. And that seems like what has happened in America, what our late friend, Dr. James Melvin Washington called soul murder. He can now only pray about it and cheer us on from a higher balcony in glory, but we can complete the needed inquiry and the healing which must follow.

Meanwhile, back in Montgomery, God had ordained young Rev. King for this task of lifting this dark cloud of chaos hate and fear, and he would later call it, healing the soul of America. This was one of the most important assignments God would give King and his associates.

If King would keep faith with God’s jubilee vision, God would give America its jubilee victory. In 1955, on a desolate night in December, when the forces of hate had gotten word that the Negroes were about to make their move for freedom, the devil got nervous, devil smart, and devil busy. The devil struck a blow for status quo, by attempting to plant fear, and then surrender before the battle, into the heart of King.

King found himself at the kitchen table, stating his reluctance to God, and drowning his fears in pots of coffee. This was the Original Kitchen Table Summit. When King, after many hours of prayer, was able to pray like his master leader, Jesus, “Not my will, but Thy will be done,” the oppressive clouds of fear and chaos were lifted from his soul, and he told God, “Here Am I, send me.” The rest is history–that is, God’s jubilee Story–with King and Mrs. Parks leading a cast of major actors and actresses in God’s jubilee drama, with an able cast of supporting players. I count myself among the early supporting cast, first in Lynchburg, Virginia, as president of the Lynchburg Improvement Association; an early affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and at age 28, one of the youngest members of King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference national board.

Now, here we all are some 50-plus years later, the nation–along with the world–finds itself in a panic mode. How can America celebrate when the clouds of oppressive chaos, fear, and hate hang so low, as to claim so many victims, from inner cities to suburbs, from nation to nation, family to family, and generation to generation? We need to pause, and hold a National Kitchen Table Summit, from the White House to your house; the school house to the work house; from the church (synagogue, mosque) house to the jailhouse; from the state house to the corporate house. Let every house that lives get the spirit, and go from jubilee vision, to jubilee victory, and see how good it feels!

That’s when jubilee becomes as real as jubilation. We must do it now and we must do it together. Talk about dialogue on race, there must be more and it must become more than talk. Talk about a dialogue on families not making it, and feeling oppressed, by poor health, by soul sickness, by burdensome debt, by the very way they see themselves from day to day in their plight. Or talk about substance-abusing Generation X, and going from love-deprivation to love-saturation, love not seen in these parts lately.

They can come to see that a soul-high is higher than any other high. Or talk about families who are making it economically, yet finding themselves feeling oppressed and depressed in every other way. We cry out with the psalmist, “Why art Thou cast down, O my Soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? (*The Holy Bible*, King James Version)” We say with the old Negro spiritual (with a slight twist), “There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded soul, whole.” Yes!

At a time of unusually high levels of wealth creation, the nation is feeling sick to its core, its soul reeling, and its mantle of leadership falling–is surely a time to hold a new jubilee summit, a National Kitchen Table Summit. It can involve character empowerment studies, in church, town, and gown. To that end, let the nation’s universities, houses of worship, and the town halls of cities, suburbs, and counties, engage one another, face to face, and technology by technology, until we go from desperation to jubilation.

A 40-day trial period, (from January 15 to February 14–a first cycle) could build up a repertoire of insights as to where we then go with it. A kind of church, town, and gown exercise is the only promising way ahead for the nation at this critical point in its history. That first cycle–beginning on Martin Luther King’s birthday–comes to a 40-day majestic closure, on Valentine’s Day.

Several major new resources are now available, to aid this dialogue. The first is a major new work, *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*, by two of the world’s foremost writers and teachers of the Enneagram, Don Richard Riso, and Russ Hudson. It is now available at your local bookstore. A second resource, which encapsulates that summit as a religious experience for African Americans, is the *Jubilee Bible*, published and already released, by the American Bible. And finally, *Worldwide Laws of Life, 200 Eternal Spiritual Principles*, by John Marks Templeton, (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 1997), is a must. Also by Templeton, *Agape Love* will help cement ties between the many faith communities and practitioners.

In this truly new, national dialogue, we will figure out together, what are the steps to go from desperation to jubilation, and we will set the stage in America and the world, for a joyful and jubilant new day. A daily discussion at the kitchen table of all those willing to be part of breathing new life into an old dream–the American dream–would involve individual families in a discussion of how to discern the presence or absence of love in their own family and how they might learn to maximize their well-being as a family within the whole world house family.

Surely, such rich dialogue, earnestly being engaged in families across the globe, offers great promise for the renewal of hope, and the prospect of love in communities everywhere, issuing forth into a grand beloved economy for all. It’s a dream we cannot live withou