

© KIMBERLY G. MASSEY | KIMBERLY GRIFFITH ANDERSON, AUTHOR

WEBSITE: WWW.KIMBERLYGA.COM/BLOG2020

EMAIL THE AUTHOR: KIM@KIMBERLYGA.COM

FAVOR AND PRIVILEGE

JUNE 28, 2020

If you have read the opening of the New Testament, the Gospel According to Matthew, you may recall that it shares the genealogy of Jesus. Abraham was the father of Issac, who was the father of Jacob...David was the father of Solomon...Jacob (a different Jacob) was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born who is called Christ. (Matthew 1:1-17) In Genesis 18:1-3, we read, “The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ²Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. ³He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord do not pass your servant by.”

I knew my grandparents, my father’s maternal grandparents, and my mother’s paternal grandmother. Many African American families can trace their family history back several generations, and it’s quite remarkable to be able to trace it back to slavery, but with limited records, it’s difficult to impossible to trace beyond that period. I saved a family reunion program from 1997 that has my children’s paternal genealogy.

Around 1825, a slave girl named Willoby, was the house maid and seamstress for the Andersons of Stateburg, SC. General Edward Anderson, a White medical doctor known as “Doc,” owned her and kept her as his mistress. (Sometimes we associate the term “mistress” with glamour, mystery and fame, but in this case, I wouldn’t make such an assumption.) She gave birth to three sons, James Anderson, Jerry Anderson, and Charlie Anderson. She and the boys lived in the home of Doc until and through the Civil War. Doc entered the war and returned in 1866. At that time, it was no longer acceptable for him to keep his Black mistress. Due to his fear of losing patients, he made an agreement with a Black man, (I would assume a former slave) Thomas Wells, that if he would marry Willoby and agree that his sons, James, Jerry, and Charlie never work in the fields or be slaves, he would give him 400 acres of farm-land, some horses, wagons, and cash money. Mr. Wells gave his consent and married Willoby. In time, Jerry Anderson became the father of Harlie, who was the father of Bennie, who was the father of Bernice who is the mother of Gerald who is the father of Zachary Anderson and Nicholas Anderson - my 15 and 13 year-old sons.

I find it interesting that when we look at the genealogy of Jesus, we see that it started with favor. The Lord showed Abraham favor, giving him a son at the age of 99. Favor makes the extraordinary possible. When we look at my children’s genealogy we see that Doc Anderson showed favor to former slaves Willoby, Jerry, Charlie, James and Thomas Wells giving them land, livestock, and money to begin their new lives. Without it, what would have happened? They likely would have had to work the fields on another plantation in order to survive. They

may have become sharecroppers, in constant debt to a former slave owner. I have not read in the Emancipation Proclamation or the 13th Amendment to the Constitution that the slaves were granted their freedom with any startup resources, so their demise was imminent - yet they overcame.

According to History.com, "By 1861, when the [Civil War](#) broke out, more than 4 million people (nearly all of them of African descent) were enslaved in 15 southern and border states." Imagine, 4 million people who have only their life and their freedom trying to make a new life with no money, no source of income, no education, and no ability to become educated. Then came the [Jim Crow Laws](#) which, "were meant to marginalize African Americans by denying them the right to vote, hold jobs, get an education or other opportunities." Then there was the [Ku Klux Klan](#), "a private club for Confederate veterans" Its membership, "grew into a secret society terrorizing Black communities and seeping through white Southern culture, with members at the highest levels of government and in the lowest echelons of criminal back alleys."

Yes, some of the freed Black people did steal. Yes, some broke laws. As described, however, the laws were intentionally unfair. Four million people were given their freedom, but no means of survival, no resources. Desperate measures were the result.

Many years have passed, and conditions for African Americans have improved. The Civil Rights Act was passed and many more educational and employment options exist, but the struggle for equality is not over. It seems it has become politically incorrect to be openly racist, but underlying racist attitudes still exist. The police, in particular, seem to have great fear of Black men and as a result use excessive force when approaching them or arresting them. They are tried, found guilty, and put to death, before they reach the jail cell. We are all familiar with the recent George Floyd, but the list of these incidents is long. It is time for rules, policies, and standard procedures to change.

If you don't understand why this is such a big deal, it may be helpful for you to 1)check your privilege and 2)check your heart. My children, in a few years, will be 4th generation college students. This is unusual in many African American families. With their genealogy we can see what made this possible - favor. The favor shown to Willoby and her new husband Thomas made it possible for them to live, educate their children, and focus on things besides day-to-day survival. A degree of generational wealth was granted with Doc Anderson's gesture. Through the proceeding generations this translates into privilege. My children have seen very little racism - or shall I say, they don't recognize racism. I was raised not to talk about race, so writing this post is a stretch for me, but my children have been asked if they are biracial, mixed, asked if they are really Black, and their friends always want to touch their hair. Because of their light skin tone, I was once asked if my son was the mailman's child. Regardless of their light skin tone, their generally cooperative spirit, and the fact they come from both maternal and paternal privilege, they may one day face a police officer who sees them as a threat. He may lose his cool and kill them for not signaling before making a turn. This must change. It should happen to no one.

While someone who has little, spends time imagining what it would be like to have more, those who have *more* do not ponder what it would be like to have *less*. In fact, someone who has more cannot fully fathom the condition of having less. People of privilege wonder why those who are struggling don't just change their conditions - why don't they just save up their money and buy a house? Why do they keep getting those payday loans? Why don't they just go to college and get a good job? Why don't they just do what the police tell them to do? Why can't they just be happy about life? If you find yourself asking these questions, you may need to check your privilege. Everyone experiences life in a different way. Everyone's history is a little different and what worked for one person may not work for another. We must learn empathy. Although it wasn't your experience, we should never belittle or dismiss another person's experience or feelings about an experience.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36) We read in the genealogy of Jesus that God showed favor to Abraham and blessed him to become the father of many nations. Forty-two generations later, Abraham's name is listed as the great-great-great... grandfather of Jesus the Messiah.

The history of sin goes back to the Garden of Eden. Paul tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) No one is exempt from a heart of sin. Because our gracious God knew this, He sent Jesus, His one and only Son, to die that we might be saved - forgiven and qualified for everlasting life. If you are saved, realize that Jesus had compassion on you because you were once harassed by evil, helpless because of your weakness, and in need of a shepherd. You have not only been forgiven of your sins, but also generational sin. With that, we must turn away from generational attitudes and develop a heart of love and empathy for others. Within your circle of influence how will you take part in the movement against indifference (the opposite of compassion), injustice, and inequality? This week, think on how you can show favor, through your privilege, and help someone in need of compassion because they are harassed, helpless and in need of a shepherd. AMEN.

Thank you for reading!

(I'm sorry this was longer than usual, but sometimes it takes a few more words to make a point.

Please share this post with someone you think it might benefit.

Kim