Marks of A Liberating Church: Sankofa, Stay Woke

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Date: 11 February 2024

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[0:00] If you would, please pray with me. Lord and giver of life, thank you for moments of high worship.

Moments where we get to lean in to an experience of praise, some of us that is deeply, deeply personal, and some of us who we're just learning about.
But thank you that this is a community in which you are truly making us into a new humanity and breaking down the dividing wall. Lord, I pray that as we reflect today together, we would sense your spirit.
We would grow in freedom. We would grow in trust of you. May we would sense how you are at work among us. Please open us in ways that are healthy and good.
In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Here, in this here place, we flesh.
[1:23] Flesh that weeps and laughs and flesh that dances and bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it.

Love it. Love it hard. Love it hard. Yonder, they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes.
They just as soon pick them out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder, they flay it. And oh, my people, they do not love your hands.
Those they use, they tie and they bind and they chop off and they leave empty. So love your hands. Raise them and kiss them.
Touch others with them. Pat them together. Stroke them on their face. Because they don't love that either. You got to love it. You.
[2:24] And no, they ain't in love with your mouth. Yonder out there, they will see it and break it. They will see it broken and then break it again. What you say out of it, they will not heed.

What you scream from it, they do not hear. What you put in to nourish your body, they will snatch away and give you leavens instead. No, they don't love your mouth. You.
Got to love it. This flesh I'm talking about here. This flesh that needs to be loved. Now, I know some of y'all might recognize that.
Those are just a few of the words that Toni Morrison uses in her novel, Beloved, to craft a scene that is set in a hush harbor. And if you've been around me, if you've talked to me, you've been around this church for a little bit of time, you know that for me this is a foundational way of understanding community and Christian gathering.
That is an embodiment.
[3:57] And that is out beyond the dominant cultures' ways of economically exploiting others in creation and politically dominating everything around.

Baby Sugs Holy reminds the people who gather to grow in aliveness. Even as the systems around them and the culture around them produce everything, everything except life.
And then what Toni Morrison has crafted in those pages has become, I think, probably the best known depiction of a hush harbor. And I said this a little bit last week, but just to put it simply again, hush harbors, sometimes called brush arbors, were these sanctuary spaces that enslaved people in the South created outside of the morality and ethics of the plantation.
Black folks would slip off into the woods or into ravines or into ravines or into ravines or into cane breaks or swamps or wherever was hidden. And they would talk and they would sing and they would dance and they would find themselves and know themselves as holy.
These gatherings, these hush harbors were completely illegal and unsanctioned. And yet there were these places in which black folks in deep mystical relation with nature and with their own African rituals and spiritualities discovered a God that was different from the one they were

encouraged to believe in on the plantation.
[5:33] And probably y'all, what awes me most is that these were people often who couldn't read or write. These were people who were considered immoral, innately, inhuman.

And they discerned together the God of liberation and the Jesus of crucified people all over the world and the spirit of freedom.
Last week, as we began Black History Month, we started to talk about these hush harbors. And I suggested that in light of Western Christianity and the way it has created disciples that are obsessed with power and dominance, that we have to find different models as a church.
So using research on hush harbors that a group of folks down in North Carolina have been doing, we started looking at marks or qualities of a liberating church.
What characterizes these kinds of churches. And last week I talked about the quality of fugitivity and holy deception. This ability to steal away, to use the words of a black spiritual.
[6:52] And I suggested that a liberating church will always have like a fugitive mindset, this way of being that is transgressive. And it's always outside of business as usual systems that keep us communally and individually from aliveness.

So today, what we're going to do, we're going to shift to our second quality. And that quality is Sankofa. Sankofa is part of the Adinkra symbol system of the Apan people.
If you've ever been to Ghana, you might be familiar with some of these symbols that might come up in a second. Yeah, those are some of them. And a translation of the concept behind Sankofa means it is not taboo to go back and fetch what is at risk of being left behind.
It's symbolized by a bird flying forward with its head turned backward and carrying this egg in its mouth, which represents the future. So this morning, instead of one person proclaiming the word, we're going to discern together what Sankofa means by having some communal proclamation.
In a second, I'm going to invite up members of our Black affinity group to come forward. And my invitation to you is, this is going to be a little less formal way of proclaiming.
[8:24] And yet, I encourage you to be open and to discern what the spirit is saying. So Anselm and Antonio and Lisa, if you want to come up. All right. Hello.

So I asked them before how they wanted me to introduce them. They were very vague, so that means. So I'll just say a few things. So, and you could also before you talk it, say your first comment, feel free to say your pronouns as well.
But just want to introduce Anselm, who actually started, I had forgotten that, the Black affinity group. So give Anselm a hand, has been around the table for a number of years. We have Lisa. Lisa. Hello.
Hi. Hi. And I hope I can say this, but breaking news is that Lisa is our newest co-director of Justice and Compassion.
Along with all that happened that was amazing up there. And then we have Antonio. I guess I'm in the mood for football. I expect some kind of theatrics when I say your name. I'm sorry.
[10:03] So Antonio, you know, very much involved, like leads the Black affinity group now, leads the community group with Heidi, community ministry is co-director with Heidi. Antonio and is involved with prayer and does flag waving, which draws us all in deeper to places we need to go.

So, so, amen. And I'm sure it's not called flag waving. I'm sure it's called something more. So, all right, before we get into Sankofa, like specifically, I want to ask kind of a background question of y'all.
So there's this long critique of among BIPOC people of Christianity being a religion of the white men. And I'm curious, like how you think about that critique for yourselves as Christians?
How have you seen Christianity used to kind of domesticate black folks? And what do you think is liberative about it? I don't mind. Sorry, I'm so wrong.
Well, first, I think that that critique kind of pops up a very whitewashed version of Christianity, one where Jesus wasn't a brown man and one where, you know, Christianity didn't exist in Egypt and Ethiopia before the slave trade.
[11:21] And then my second thought on that is, I think that reclaiming, renegotiating, making our own has been the name of the game for black Americans in this country for a really long time.

So that's just, you know, it's one of those things that we have reclaimed and made our own and discerned on our own. Oh, there's going to be a polite panel. I see that. Okay, y'all be real polite. Okay.

Yeah, I 100% agree with Lisa. I think that, especially when you think about like, our current worldview in terms of Christianity is a European adaptation. Like this was not what ancient Jewish people in Palestine were worshipping in this context in terms of like these buildings and these musicians and the music selection.
And so I think it's, you know, sort of inappropriate to seed all of like the history of God to white people. Jesus existed in a context before they colonized the world.
And so for me, while I understand that critique, it doesn't feel super real to me. Because I just, Jesus I know is not a Scandinavian man. In terms of how Christianity is both liberating and also stifling, I think in some ways, you know, I grew up in a black church.
[12:48] And I remember it was a Pentecostal church. And they had very strict rules on female attire. Women could not wear pants to church. And even in real life oftentimes.

And I remember my grandma saying how because she could not wear pants, she had to turn down the job one time. And just seeing how like religion and like fake rules that were spiritually justified was used to like curtail black woman's economic mobility.
I think that's just like a disastrous way in which religion has been used. Conversely, I think about how, especially for me as a black man in this country, where there's so many stereotypes about like what we are, who we are and how we behave.
And I think for me, I think for me, having a God who says what is true about me, having a God who says that I am whole, that I am not, you know, filthy or criminal or, you know, all the things that the world will try to ascribe to me in my blackness.
That's not what God calls me. And for me, the voice of God is what allows me to be in a really racist world oftentimes. I remember I had a dream a few years ago before I had a really intense work review.
[14:03] And in the dream, I was getting this really intense review from these partners at this law firm. And in the dream, I told them, what you're saying about me is not true because God does not think that. And for me, that is what Christianity is for me.

It's like letting the voice of God define me and not a broken world. Yeah, I mean, I don't have too much to add to what, you know, Lisa and Antonio shared.
But I think for me, like, you know, clearly historically, like Christianity is not a white person's religion. It was founded by, and its first adherents were, you know, poor brown and, you know, poor people of Middle Eastern and African descent who helped that to really spread and take root.
So that's very clear. So, but for me, I feel like, you know, taking back the understanding of Christianity, of this religion, of this philosophy, this way of perspective of viewing the world and divinity in ourselves, taking it back from this kind of white-coatedness, I think, is a way of taking back power.
And I feel like for me, like, I'm a student of religious history. I love looking at the history of religions and where they started and how they grew and how they've become to be expressed in, you know, our contemporary setting.
[15:26] And for me, it's like religion is often, it's often, religions most, or first original adherents are often the marginalized people because it gave them a power to overcome what the, you know, wealthy, powerful, the oppressors were doing to them.

And when the people who were in power realized that the power of this faith, of these beliefs was stronger than their power to oppress, they then took the power of that religion to use that to oppress the people.
And that's how they became a white man's religion, you know, in the sense that a lot of the oppression and conquest and colonizing and empire building that's been done in the modern world has been done by, you know, people who are now known to be as white today.
And so I think that for me, kind of taking back that moniker of Christian faith or, you know, of any faith that has been used to oppress, I think, is a way of taking back that power of seeing like there's something here that is liberative, built into, baked into its foundations that allows us to take back the power to be ourselves, to be free, and to free others.
So, yeah. I knew you were going to do this. Okay. So good. All right. So let's turn to this idea of Sankofa. And I'm curious, like, what do you, and we can even make this personal too.
[16:59] When you think about for yourself what it's been important to go back and get to find wholeness, can you name some of those things? Are there things that you think about, like, in terms of how we think about black history we need to go back and get?

Yeah. Talk to me a little bit about that process. And even as I ask, I want to name the tension. There's a writer that I really like on Friendship who talks about, you know, going back to the past and names that often for brown, black and brown people, going back, we want to go back to lineage.
And often, sometimes for folks who are white, we want to get away from lineage. And how do you also talk about that? So anyway, just curious, like, how does Sankofa showed up for y'all, showed up in terms of how you think about black history?
I can start. I think for me it's really about revisiting spaces in history where people of color who are intersectionally identified get erased.
You know, in Okechi's prayer he mentioned Bayard Rustin, who's a close confidant of Martin Luther King. And even as a black American growing up in this country, I hadn't really learned about him until the last few years, because he was queer.
[18:14] And many of the civil rights leaders were Christian in the black church, and so that was a stigma. And even his advocacy almost got curtailed because there's a rumor that him and him, okay, were like, you know, consortium in ways that were deemed ungodly.

And just thinking about how many other queer people who are black have been in a movement who just were never highlighted in this sort of struggle. You know, it was also really interesting, the March on Washington had its, I think, 60th anniversary last year.
And one thing that was noted is that in the original one in 1963, there are no women who could speak on the platform. It was all black men and white men. And just thinking about how Coretta Scott King and all these other, like, women led these movements and just were never given their due.
And how that's also part of our history that we have to reclaim, a history that sought to erase certain gender identities and sexual orientations. And really letting that be something that, you know, we champion in this new season.
Because we are in a different sort of timeline, luckily, and we can be more open and reclaim people who tried to mute us and act like we did not ever exist. You know, I can share something real quick.
[19:36] You know, I think that for me, kind of thinking about, you know, black history in the context of Sankofa is, you know, I think a lot about, for me, I've been on a journey over the past, like, two years almost, of trying to kind of, you know, redefine what blackness is.

I feel like, you know, to many black people, I'm sure, here in the audience here who may have grown up being called an Oreo, you know, like myself, you know, well-spoken or whatever, you know, often being called black on the outside, white on the inside.
And I always would question, well, what does it mean to be black? What does it mean to be white? And why is it, you know, et cetera. So I've always been constantly thinking about that. I feel like over the past few years I've really been, have found some, like, some great ground to kind of build and grow a new understanding of that.
But I feel like for me, like, a lot of that is divorcing blackness from what black people do because so much of black people's relationship to our country is based on our functionality because that's what it was from the beginning.
It's what are you, how are we functioning and serving and, you know, the building of this nation. And so I think a lot about, like, Black History Month, it's a lot about the accomplishments, what black people have done, you know.
[21:03] And I think those are important. But I think what's important about history in general is that it's not just about, you know, a mark of what people have done, but it's what that says about who we are because of what we've done or maybe even how what we've done spurs off from who we are.

And so I think that for me, and how I tie this to even just like my faith is, you know, building or reading my faith less in what am I doing to be a Christian and who am I being and how is it impacting what I'm doing, you know.
And so when I think about this in the context of blackness, I think that there are so many things about what is a part of the essence of being people who are descended from, you know, an African identity that saw a lot more oneness in the world, you know, that saw a lot more, that placed the community and the collective above the individual.
These are the things that saw that, you know, whose way of being and seeing the world is completely at odds with what our society has become, which is rooted in, again, capitalism and

production and exploitation.
Those things are constantly at odds with each other, the essence of blackness and I think where a lot of our society goes. And so when I look at what that is, how does that inform how black people have operated, what they have done, and how does it inform what I am doing as well in my expression of blackness, in my expression of faith.
[22:43] So I tied it all together, hopefully in a way that makes sense, but yeah, thanks. All right, so when y'all think about Sankofa also personally, are there particular ancestors that come to mind for you?

They can be people you are literally connected to, or people that, you know, are just your ancestors and spirits. Who are they? How do they inspire you? I know often when I'm in movement spaces they always ask this question like, what do you bring and why are you here and who inspired you to be here essentially?
So any thoughts about that? I can start again.
You don't have to. I think it would be for me, my late grandma. She passed away in 2021 at the age of 94.
And just her presence in my life was such a radical intervention of grace. So she was born in Conroe, Texas. And she just grew up with a lot of racism and sexism.
[24:02] And it didn't make her bitter. Like she stayed hopeful. She stayed like always believing in a Jesus who wanted to see the goodness of black people in a land of living.

And one thing that I think really represents that dynamic is that she was not my biological grandma. So essentially, when she was in Texas, she had a miscarriage when she was younger.
And because of racism, they did not treat her properly. And it made her not be able to have children. And my mom was actually my grandpa's cousin.
And she was raised in Arkansas. And her family was really poor. And they could not afford to sort of like feed her. And so my grandma and my grandpa took my mom in and adopted her when she was five.
And just seeing my mom's other siblings and the life trajectory that they've lived versus the life that my grandparents gave my mom and the way I benefited from that.
[25:05] And when you hear, you know, my grandma talk about these issues, there's never like, oh, these white folk were racist and maybe not have children. There was never that. And just seeing her have a God who is so redemptive, whose reconciliatory touch has no bounds, it was just beautiful.

It was just beautiful to me. And it really inspired my faith. And I think that's honestly why I'm so Christian. Being queer in the church, of course, is really hard. But it's just knowing a God that's better than we can imagine, a God that will redeem everything the enemy tries to take from us. That's a God who's worthy of worship. That's a God who's worthy of our whole lives. And I think having my grandma modeled that for me and having her, you know, go to Jesus and still have happiness in her heart despite a world that took so much from her, like that's an ancestor that helps me draw closer to God even today.
Thank you for sharing that. For me, I would say my mother as well. She endured a lot throughout her life and she remained faithful to God throughout the trials.
And that's something that I think I really struggle with when things get bad. But I read something the other day that, you know, talks about like, we can leave or we can leave the presence of God over and over again, but he never leaves us.
[26:36] And my mom was just a great example of like what I'd like to be in my own faith and how I'd like to, you know, not leave so much his presence.

Okay. Whew. So, so I think I want to go to the question that for me is the probably the one I'm most curious about, of these.
So colonization has often disconnected black folks from their ritual history, indigenous spirituality practices, connecting with ancestors, libations, building altars, those kinds of things.
All of those things have been demonized as, you know, bad or pagan or evil or un-Christian. So curious about like what, how y'all think about that.
I think about this a lot, particularly as sometimes I feel like there's more sensitivity to those kinds of things than if someone's, you know, Christian and also interested in Buddhism.

[27:46] Like there's a different level of that people feel. So curious how y'all think about that. Yeah. I can hop in here real quick. Have any of y'all seen the documentary, I think it came out last year called The Mission?

Yeah. So not the, not the Robert De Niro film from like back in the nineties, but, but it's, it's about, um, and I'm, I'm, I'm, I think his name was John Allen, something like that. I forgot his name, but it's about the, the, the young man who, um, felt that God was leading him to go to, uh, an island in, uh, India, you know, uh, off the coast of India that had, had zero contact with the outside world and preach the gospel to them.
And then of course he was killed on that island. And it was a huge deal back in 2018 when this documentary came out here. And I remember why I watched it a few, uh, weeks ago and it was at a hard time watching it.
Cause I think, you know, I feel like this is a room of people who, you know, have some sort of like religious trauma or something like that. It might trigger some of that if you're, if you're watching that back, especially if you were kind of, you know, gripping an evangelical kind of mission minded, uh, kind of type of place.
But one of the things that came out of that was that, that came from that was there, uh, they actually interviewed this man and he had embedded himself within this tribe, um, in South America for, for a few decades.
[29:02] And by the end of that, um, I won't spoil his, his arc, but something that he said was that. Oftentimes the way in which we, in which Christianity has been taught to and forced upon, um, you know, people, uh, as, as an effort, as, as, as an engine of, you know, colonization.

Right. Um, it leads these people to become, he said, it, it, people, they become more suspicious or, uh, superstitious in ways that they weren't superstitious before.
And what's so interesting about that to me is that, like, I think that a lot of like, you know, things that are called witchcraft or paganism or, you know, or, you know, uh, voodoo or, or whatnot are said to be, you know, uh, things that are kind of, are superstitious, uh, superstitions in a way.
Um, and yet, uh, these things were not always seen that way. And again, part of that spiritual practice. And so, I don't know, I think about that, um, you know, sorry, I kind of lost my thread here. Where am I going with that? Um, yeah. Just, you know, let, let, let people be, let people be what they need to be.
[30:19] You know, and I, and I think, you know, I, I, I tie that back to something that I think Antonio shared. I just, I just love what you shared about that dream in which you were having this conversation. Everyone was telling you, this is like what you're doing.

This is who you are. And you're like, no, cause God doesn't see me that way. And I think that's so much of our cultural expression. Like, I mean, I think here's the thought, right? Like that's happened to all of us in here.
Right. Like whiteness is like to become white. Like Italians had to give up their Italian heritage. Irish folks had to give up their Celtic roots. Right. Like to become white.
You know, like that's something that has a violence that's been done to all of us. And so I think that this aspect of Sankofa that helps, that can be very liberative, liberative for us is, you know, looking past the superstition, the superstition that was given to us, um, to find the things that are elemental to who we are.
Um, that, um, you know, can really inform who we are moving forward as well. I also think it's interesting because so many things that like a white colonial mindset will see as antithetical to Christianity.
[31:25] I think it's oftentimes not sort of viewed in that lens when you're talking to people of color. For example, going back to my grandma, you know, super Pentecostal, tongue talking, Bible believing, like anti what they call the demonic.

But let me tell you, she had this thing with my little sister, right? Where when the moon was like small, she would cut my sister's hair. And so as the moon grew, she said my sister's hair would grow.
And I was like, eh, this isn't in the Bible, but I'm okay with it. That's right. Yes. And like, I wish you would have called my grandma pagan. She'd be like, what are you talking about? Um, and so I think there are just so many things that like the white gaze makes you suspicious of that has just always been in Christianity.

Like Christianity has always been a syncretic religion. Um, I think we just forget because of it's like, you know, Roman, Greek empire affiliation, that all that also wasn't in the original toolkit either. There are just older things that we've grown to accept, like, you know, all the pagan holidays that overlap with our Christian holidays. Like all these things that are just need to be valid and normative because they happened 2,000 years ago and were by European adjacent people versus things that happen today by people of color that are seen with suspicion because it's new to like those communities at least in a way that I think creates, yeah, just like an unfair bias.
[32:43] Um, because the thing that like the God of the universe can only come through like a drum and a guitar, um, and that there's all these other rituals that are just like either benign or non-helpful.

Like tell that to our ancestors who like found God in these hush harbors through these things, right? Um, yeah. Okay. That was it.
Sorry. Um, all right. I'm going to ask a final question. Before I do, I just, for, you know, all of us who may want some scriptural hooks for this, I'm going to give a couple of places to, to consider, to take home, to reflect on.
So the first one is just Genesis 50. I love like thinking about this idea of going back and getting and carrying forward. At that last chapter of Genesis, Joseph dies, is passing away.
And he says, when you get to the, to the promised land, because you're going to get there, like I know you will carry my bones with you and bury them. And so I think when we think about Sankofa, one thing to consider is like, whose bones are you carrying?
[33:52] Like, who are you taking with you? Um, as you make your journey with God. I think another obvious place to look is in Hebrews. Um, uh, there's a chapter, people call it the faith chapter, Hebrews 11.

And it just names all these people who went before and Abraham and Moses and it goes on. And then it talks about people who are unnamed, people who are sawn in two and are persecuted for their faith.
And then at the beginning of chapter 12, Hebrews says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin that, that clings to us.
So, and run the race. So again, this idea of like, and it is a long chapter that this, it's because of them that we can move forward. And then the last one I want to point out is just in Mark, Mark 9, the story that's often known as a transfiguration.
Um, in which Jesus is revealed in his glory to the disciples, three of them that are winning, they don't know what to do. They're like, I don't know what's going on. But in that moment, it's important to remember that Jesus appears with Moses and Elijah.
[35:02] So again, there's this connection to Jesus being situated in the full history of his own people in the moment when it's most clear that he is God. And I think that that also like ties us to Sankofa.

So my last question is just, are there scriptures y'all think about Sankofa? And when you think about kind of the good news, you know, what do you think that good news is for black folks and, and that black, black folks and black Christianities have to give to the wider church?
What is that good news that you want to leave us with? For the first part of the question, um, I think just the story of how Jesus lived his life.
Um, I of course think that the incarnation and the resurrection are both miracles, but the way that he lived his life, um, I think sets an example for me on, especially like who I'm serving, who I'm hanging out with, who I, um, stand up with.
And then the second part of your question was. How is that? How does that give you a new relationship? Yeah.
[36:19] Well, I would, I would give a different answer for what I think the good news is. I think the good news is that we all have inherent worth. And I think that this is something that we were able to, black people were able to discern for ourselves without anyone else telling us this.

Anyone else. And, and just knowing this, just, just having this knowledge of it without any logic or any proof or anything like that.
The proof is that we exist. Um, and I think that that, um, is something that the church Christianity, the Christianities have not always practiced well.

I think that that has, God's love has sometimes come with conditions. And I think the more that we, the better that we can practice God's love unconditionally inherent worth, um, the better we can serve each other, the better we can love each other, the better that we can love ourselves.
And it just creates a lot of implications for better theology, I think. Yeah.
[37:30] I mean, for me, I was, I was thinking a lot about this and I, for me, I think it's, uh, the story of Moses and, and, you know, I think so much of black spiritual expression, uh, especially while, uh, you know, we were enslaved people, you know, glommed on to the story of Moses and the Israelites.

And their, uh, escape, their freedom, their liberation from slavery. Um, they're wandering through the wilderness, but also their, their, you know, entrance into the promised land. And, you know, Moses' story, especially in the light of Sankofa is, you know, he, you know, was born a Hebrew. Uh, he was, uh, taken into the, uh, you know, the, the, uh, Egyptian house of the, uh, Pharaoh's daughter and raised as an Egyptian. Um, and it wasn't until he went back to his roots and understood, uh, who he was as a Hebrew that he realized that what, you know, what, uh, that what he was raised in, the system that he, you know, uh, was born into, that he had no choice but to be raised in as, as, as an Egyptian.
And, uh, was oppressive, was, um, inhumane, uh, was not of this God that he had just, you know, kind of learned about and, and connected with. And it, and it motivated him to go out and to, uh, begin this work of liberation.
Uh, and I think that for me, that's something very similar. I think, you know, I, I, an example of this I'll give to you all to read, uh, for later. Zora Neale Hurston wrote an awesome book called Moses, Man in the Mountain, where she kind of takes the story, recontextualizes it, uh, through, through a, kind of a black, um, you know, uh, spiritual lens.
[39:03] I think it's really great to look at that. But yeah, I mean, I think that for me that like, um, you know, the good news about, I think the good news that can be found in black spiritual expression, especially black spiritual expression of the Christian faith for the church as a whole, uh, really, yeah, it really rests in what Lisa shared here is, is the, the shared humanity that we all have because of our sharing of the divine image.

Um, I think that, you know, it's, uh, any sort of doctrinal, uh, belief or, you know, uh, that, that seeks to divide people or that seeks to say that, like, that seeks to put some sort of a bar for someone to attain to in order to become a member is not of, uh, God.
It's not of, uh, this, this, um, idea, this concept that we all share in this divine image. And so I think that, that, that is a gift for all of us here, uh, I think who have all kind of escaped, who have all stolen away from, or from, for the most part, from, from places where that was not something that we experienced for so long.
And we have a great opportunity to kind of, you know, um, you know, build that here and hopefully to, to share that with, um, you know, other branches of this Christian faith that, you know, don't have the light, that, that lighter understanding of liberation that, that we get to hopefully share here.
So, yeah. So I have a two-part answer. So in terms of, I think, spirituality, I really love, uh, the story of the Magi and how there are these, like, random men from, like, Persia who, like, didn't know anything about Judaism or Christianity and just, like, followed stars and met Jesus.
[40:50] Um, and so, like, as we talk about Sankofa, like, if they can find him, we definitely can. Um, and then on the second part about sort of, like, I think for me, like, more like black culture, black church, you know, when I was younger, my parents divorced and so I have a number of half siblings.

And when I got to college, I started talking to my white peers and they would say stuff like, oh, my half-sister. And I was like, oh, interesting. I just say sister. Um, and the notion of, like, family being a foundation that's based on relation and not, like, any other, like, label.
Um, I think for especially as a church like ours, as multi-theological, if we're trying to be a community based on the same ideas, we're not going to be a community. Yeah. Our community has to be based on us having a commitment that's relational and not theological.
Mm-hmm. Um, that we are all a family who's seeking to live out a more beautiful gospel. But we have different ideas. That's fine. Um, because that's not what we're defined by. Family's not defined by having the same ideas.
It's defined by a commitment to being in life in, you know, unison. And so for me, I think the black community and the black church does a good job of that. And I hope that that can be a broader

message that's, you know, integrated in our church as well.
[42:00] Amazing. Amazing. Okay. Yeah, keep clapping them up. Keep them clapping them up. Thank y'all so much for being willing to do this.

That was, that was word. So thank y'all so much. Thank you.