

# The Wisdom to See, the Courage to Heal

*A Sermon on Unity, Wisdom, and the Hubris of Our Age*

Scripture: Proverbs 11:2; James 3:17; Luke 4:18-19

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March 2, 2025

I have been meditating on Romans 12:2 for the past several days as I think about what I have prepared for today. Romans 12:2 says that we should not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The local church is a living organism that is called NOT to assimilate into Empire, or into any form of supremacy culture.

I have studied various forms of critical theories, and one of the ones that has shaped me very deeply is queer theory. Queer Theory is a reading strategy, and it challenges us to deconstruct and question the heteronormative structures that society often imposes. It invites us to think beyond binaries and to reimagine the narratives that have been accepted without question.

In this context, queer theory aligns with the call to resist conformity, as mandated by Romans 12:2, urging us to transform and renew our minds. By challenging the status quo, we are encouraged to look deeper into the oppressive systems around us and seek liberation.

Queer theory is not just about understanding sexuality or gender; it is about understanding how power operates in subtle and overt ways to maintain control. It resonates with the essence of liberation theology, advocating for justice, equity, and the dismantling of any system that oppresses.

In this sermon, as we reflect on the hubris of our age, queer theory provides a lens to see where our religious and social practices have strayed from the path of wisdom and love. It challenges us to create spaces that are inclusive and affirming of all identities, recognizing the divine in each person.

As we seek unity rooted in wisdom, queer theory challenges us to embrace the complexity of human experiences and to cultivate communities that reflect the radical inclusivity of God's love. It encourages us to embrace the Spirit's call to freedom, justice, and transformative love, aligning with the teachings of Jesus who consistently stood with the marginalized and oppressed.

## **Introduction: The Hubris of Our Age**

Friends, we are living in a time of great hubris—a moment when political and religious leaders mistake **power for wisdom, certainty for truth, and control for unity**. The **theological and political arrogance of our age** has led us not toward the kin-dom of God, but away from it—building walls instead of bridges, offering shallow peace instead of deep justice.

And yet, Scripture tells us that **wisdom is not found in power but in humility**.

**Wisdom does not fear truth. Wisdom makes space for the oppressed. Wisdom sees clearly.**

But wisdom is in short supply today. The church, much like the nation, has **too often chosen comfort over courage, silence over justice, and power over love**.

This is not new. Frederick Douglass, James Baldwin, and Howard Thurman all saw this hubris in their time. They saw a **false unity that demanded silence instead of repair**.

Liberation theology teaches us that **God is always on the side of the oppressed**, that God's wisdom is disruptive, that divine love is always a call to action.

So today, we must ask:

**What does it mean to seek unity that is rooted in wisdom? And how do we resist the hubris of our age?**

### **I. The Hubris of Power: Frederick Douglass & the Cost of False Unity**

Frederick Douglass was a man who knew the dangers of a **false unity that refused to confront injustice**. In his famous speech *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?*, he exposed the **hypocrisy of a nation that claimed freedom while maintaining slavery**.

He did not mince words. He called out **the white churches that blessed the institution of slavery, that prayed with shackled hands and preached to people in chains**.

And what is that if not hubris?

- The hubris of believing that **Christianity and empire can be one and the same**.
- The hubris of **confusing order with peace, submission with faithfulness**.
- The hubris of thinking that unity can be built on the backs of the suffering.

Liberation theology reminds us that **God does not stand in the pulpits of the powerful but in the streets with the oppressed**.

- Jesus did not come to maintain the status quo—he came to **set the captives free**.
- Any unity that **ignores oppression is not unity—it is submission**.
- Any theology that **protects power instead of people is not from God—it is from empire**.

Douglass saw it. He called it out. And today, we must do the same.

→ **Wisdom does not fear division when it is truth that divides.**

### **II. The Hubris of Certainty: James Baldwin & the Courage to Face Ourselves**

James Baldwin understood the **deep dangers of certainty**. He knew that one of the greatest sins of this country was **its refusal to face itself, its unwillingness to tell the truth about its own violence, its own lies, its own self-deception**.

Baldwin wrote:

*“People who shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction.”*

- He saw how white America wanted to be innocent rather than accountable.
- He saw how churches wanted reconciliation without repentance, forgiveness without repair.
- He saw how politicians wanted peace without justice, without truth, without sacrifice.

Liberation theology teaches us that **there is no salvation without a reckoning, no healing without confession, no unity without truth**.

And yet, today:

- Too many pulpits preach grace without accountability.
- Too many leaders want change without the discomfort of transformation.
- Too many people fear being wrong more than they fear being unfaithful.

Baldwin knew that **only those willing to face the truth will be free.**

→ **Wisdom requires humility, and humility begins with an honest reckoning.**

### **III. The Wisdom to Heal: Howard Thurman & the Unity of the Spirit**

Howard Thurman, the great mystic and theologian, knew that unity is not about **forcing sameness but about honoring the sacred dignity of all people.**

He wrote in *Jesus and the Disinherited*:

*“The religion of Jesus makes the love-ethic central. Love has no meaning apart from its expression in action.”*

The unity of **empire** is forced.

The unity of the **Spirit** is chosen.

- Empire says, **“Agree with me, or be cast out.”**
- Spirit says, **“Come, let us reason together.”**
- Empire says, **“Keep the peace.”**
- Spirit says, **“Seek justice.”**
- Empire says, **“Don’t make waves.”**
- Spirit says, **“Step into the storm.”**

Liberation theology teaches us that **unity without justice is just another form of oppression.**

True unity is forged in the struggle for truth.

Thurman calls us beyond **fear** and into **love—love that is not passive, but active, persistent, and wise.**

→ **To be truly united, we must become students of wisdom, practicing humility, patience, and radical love.**

### **Conclusion: A Call to Humble Courage**

We are living in an age of hubris—where certainty is prized more than wisdom, power more than humility, and control more than truth.

But **God’s wisdom is not the wisdom of empire.**

- God’s wisdom is peaceable, gentle, and open to reason.
- God’s wisdom is rooted in the voices of the oppressed, not the powerful.
- God’s wisdom sets captives free, rather than securing the status quo.

The question for us today is this:

**Will we be wise enough to listen?**

Will we have the courage to name where our unity has been false?

Howard Thurman calls us to the unity of the Spirit.

James Baldwin calls us to the humility of self-examination.

Frederick Douglass calls us to the justice of true freedom.

And Jesus—

Jesus calls us to follow the **wisdom of God** rather than the hubris of the world.

Ashe. Amen. May it be so.