

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 8/29/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, August 30 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, give thanks for the generosity of those who support GOD'S mission in the world. Thank GOD for gifts given to bless others. Pray that GOD will multiply those gifts according to GOD'S will.*

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This past week, President Biden announced the cancelling of student debt for many. Some have condemned the action while others have praised it. As I thought about it, I couldn't help but reflect on the biblical concept of Jubilee.

In Luke's gospel, at the beginning of HIS first sermon, JESUS quotes the prophet Isaiah, "The SPIRIT of the LORD is upon me and has anointed me to proclaim...the favorable year of the LORD." JESUS was referencing Leviticus 25 and GOD'S plan for debt forgiveness. Every seven years, the Jewish nation was to cancel all debts in order to correct for the injustice of an unequal distribution of resources. This seventh year would be a "Sabbath," and would be called the "Year of Jubilee." The Bible (King James version and others) refers to "usury," the inevitable consequence of lending money with interest attached. The people of Israel came to think of the practice of Jubilee as a "clean slate," a part of GOD'S design for how GOD'S people should live. Jubilee was designed to remind the children of Israel of their time of slavery in Egypt and to ensure that Israelites remained free, including from debt.

American slaves would sing songs—spirituals—that called for and reflected the hope of the Year of Jubilee when they might be set free. Spirituals like "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore," and "Go Down, Moses," used biblical images to look to GOD for the day when those in slavery might be released from their bondage. During the week, songs would typically be sung slowly and sorrowfully to reflect the struggles of the slaves and the dream of freedom. On Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, the one day of the week when slaves generally did not have to work for their masters, this glimpse of freedom would be reflected in more joyful songs like "Rock My Soul," and "Fare Ye Well." These Sunday songs came to be known as "jubilees."

It's worth noting that in the entire history of Israel, the Year of Jubilee, though talked about often, has never been observed. The idea of cancelling the debts of someone who owes you simply has not reached actual practice. The idea of Jubilee was rooted in restoration of social relationships, economic security, and the stability and wellbeing of the community. The theologian, pastor, and teacher, C.B. Samuel, writes that "*Jubilee was a recovery of identity, especially for the poor. It is not about simply correcting economic problems, which is very important; not even just caring for the poor because they're poor; it is restoring identity which is part of their [Israel's] history and very important for them. Jubilee operated as a corrective because people were tight-fisted and hard-hearted. When we talk about Jubilee now, people are reluctant—it's a problem of the heart, not a problem of economics.*"

As Christians, we should live daily with debt forgiveness in our minds. When we pray the LORD'S Prayer, we ask, "forgive us our trespasses," which can also be translated "debts." We are blessed to be freed from the debt we owe GOD for our behaviors which are in opposition to what GOD desires for

us. We have been forgiven so much more than we can even imagine and are free of that debt so that we can, in turn forgive others. Each day we can arise and proclaim our own Jubilee as a blessing from GOD. Then we can make it a goal in our lives to offer Jubilee to others because of what we, ourselves have received.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey