

# LENT

in the **Black Church Tradition:**  
*A 40-Day Justice Journey*

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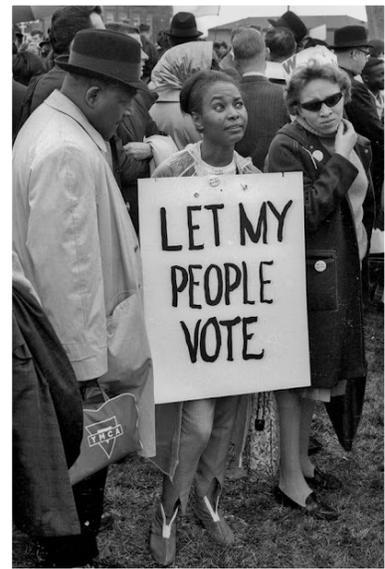
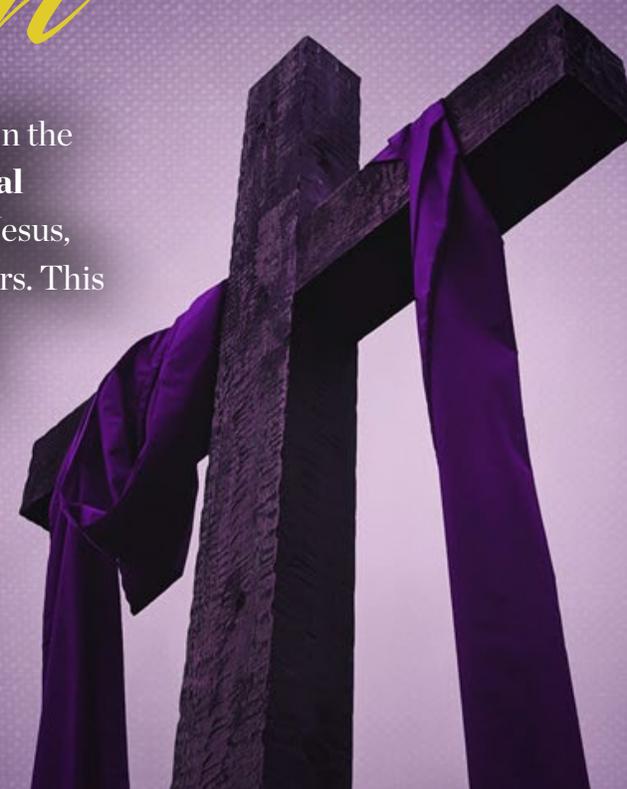
**PNBC**

PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL  
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# Introduction

Lent is a sacred season of reflection, repentance, and renewal. In the Black Church tradition, it has also been a time of **deep spiritual resistance and liberation**, echoing the prophetic witness of Jesus, the Hebrew prophets, and the freedom struggles of our ancestors. This 40-day devotional is designed to ground faith communities in **scriptural reflection, prayer, and direct action**, equipping us to confront racism, economic injustice, and the rise of white nationalism.

Each week includes a **scripture passage, prayer, reflection question, and action step**, guiding us to embody justice as an act of faith.



# Week 4

## Reflection: There's Always a Woman!

Throughout scripture and history, the role of women has often been obscured, minimized or untold. Yet when we read closely, women appear again and again as leaders, protectors, prophets, and truth-tellers.

**Shiphrah and Puah** midwived the liberation of a nation.

**Deborah** judged Israel and led the people in a victorious battle.

**Esther** confronted empire to save her people.

**Mary** carried and nurtured The Christ.

In **Numbers 27**, the daughters of Zelophehad challenged the law that would deny them their father's inheritance simply because he had no sons. Five sisters spoke truth before the leaders of Israel and demanded justice. When Moses brought the case before God, the response was clear:

**“What the daughters of Zelophehad are saying is right.”** (Numbers 27:7)

The law changed and future generations would benefit because women spoke.

And like the daughters of Zelophehad, throughout American history women have spoken truth to systems that denied their humanity.

Black women were central to the abolition of slavery, the fight for civil rights, and the ongoing struggle for justice in our nation.

**Sojourner Truth** stood before crowds and asked the piercing question, “Ain't I a Woman?” challenging both racism and sexism.

**Harriet Tubman** led persons enslaved to freedom

through the Underground Railroad and later served as a spy for the Union Army.

**Ida B. Wells** risked her life exposing the truth about lynching.

**Diane Nash** helped organize the Freedom Rides and student movements that dismantled segregation.

**Ella Baker** built grassroots leadership that shaped the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

**Fannie Lou Hamer** challenged the nation to confront its hypocrisy about democracy.

**The prayer of PNBC's own Dr. Prathia Hall inspired the dream of a King and moved the world.**

And in our own time, Black women continue to shape movements for justice and raising the moral question that has reverberated across the nation:

**Do Black lives matter?**

Even as Black women lead, they remain among the most vulnerable to economic and institutional exclusion.

In the past year alone, hundreds of thousands of Black women have been laid off or pushed out of employment, particularly in sectors tied to public service and administration. When Black women lose jobs, the consequences ripple across generations—impacting children, families, churches and entire communities.

These outcomes are not accidental.

They occur when institutional power and ideological narratives converge—when systems and false narratives combine to justify who deserves security and who does not.

But Zelophehad's daughters remind us that unjust systems are not permanent.

During this Lenten season, we honor the sacred labor of Black women and we remember what scriptures repeatedly declare:

***When women stand up and speak truth, communities listen, and even unjust laws must reckon with the justice of God!***

In God's Plan, there's ALWAYS a Woman..

**Rev. Dr. Jacqueline A. Thompson**  
*The Allen Temple Baptist Church*  
*Sr. Pastor (Oakland, California)*  
*2nd Vice-President, PNBC*



## Opening Prayer for Womanhood

God of our mothers and our grandmothers,  
God who created women in wisdom, strength, and courage,  
We thank You for the women who carried faith through wilderness seasons.  
For the mothers who protected life,  
the daughters who spoke truth,  
the sisters who organized freedom,  
and the elders who held communities together.  
When the world questioned their worth,  
You called them leaders.  
When systems tried to silence them,  
You raised their voices.  
Open our hearts this week  
to see clearly the dignity and divine calling of women—  
especially Black women whose labor, love, and leadership  
have sustained families, movements, and churches.  
Give us the courage to hear their stories,  
to honor their leadership,  
and to stand together in the pursuit of justice.

Amen.



## Contemporary Leader Spotlight:

# Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon

### Who Was Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon?

Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon (1950–2018) was a groundbreaking theologian, ethicist, and pioneer of womanist theology. She became the first Black woman ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1974 and is widely recognized as the founder of Black womanist theological ethics, a field that centers the moral wisdom and lived experiences of Black women in Christian thought.

Dr. Cannon insisted that the everyday experiences of Black women—our survival strategies, moral reasoning, creativity, and faith—should be understood as sacred sources for ethical reflection and theological insight. Her work challenged churches and academic theology to confront racism, sexism, and economic injustice while honoring the leadership and spiritual authority of Black women.

Through books such as *Black Womanist Ethics* and *Katie's Canon*, Cannon argued that faith must not ignore injustice but must help communities name truth, resist oppression, and create new possibilities for justice and liberation.

*“Even when they call your truth a lie, tell it anyway.”*

Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon



**Listen and Reflect**

<https://youtu.be/o8rOCHJFvH4>

This week, listen to Rev. Dr. Cannon preach and reflect on the ways Black women's experiences shape faith, ethics, and community life.

#### As you listen, consider:

- What wisdom emerges from the lived experiences of Black women?
- How have Black women shaped the moral and spiritual direction of our communities?
- What truths have Black women carried that institutions have often ignored?

# Scripture Reflection

## *Weekly Reflection: The Daughters Who Changed the Law*

(Numbers 27:1-7)

In the book of Numbers, we encounter five women whose courage changed the law of Israel.

The daughters of Zelophehad—**Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah**—came forward and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and the entire assembly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. They said:

*“Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among the followers of Korah who rebelled against the Lord, but he died for his own sin and left no sons. Why should our father’s name disappear from his clan because he had no son? Give us property among our father’s relatives.”*

Moses brought their case before the Lord.  
And the Lord answered.

***“What the daughters of Zelophehad are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father’s relatives and give their father’s inheritance to them.”*** – Numbers 27:7

The law changed because women spoke.  
The courage of these daughters reminds us that justice from the system find the courage to name the truth, inheritance laws and affirmed that women could community.  
Their story is not only about land.  
It is about dignity, voice, and belonging.



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# The Four Levels of Oppression

As you prepare to share your story, reflect on the different ways injustice operates in our lives and communities:



## INDIVIDUAL

What messages have you absorbed about your own worth, power, or voice?



## INTERPERSONAL

Where have you experienced unfair treatment, dismissal, or harm in relationships or workplaces?



## INSTITUTIONAL

What policies, systems, or practices have shaped your opportunities, livelihood, or safety?



## IDEOLOGICAL

What cultural stories or stereotypes have been used to justify injustice or silence truth?

## *REFLECTION QUESTIONS*

### **For Black Women**

1. Where in your life have you had to speak up for your dignity, opportunity, or rightful place—like the daughters of Zelophehad? What gave you the courage to do so?
2. What parts of your story—your leadership, your sacrifice, your resilience—deserve to be told and honored in your family, church, or community?
3. What would it mean for your voice and experience to help shape the policies and priorities of our communities today?



# Action for the Week

## *Speak Your Truth*

This week we invite you to **tell your story**.

The daughters of Zelophehad changed the law by telling the truth about their situation.

In the same spirit, we invite you to reflect on your own experiences and share your story through our community survey.

Your story matters.

Your truth matters.

**And when stories come together, they become the foundation for a people's agenda rooted in justice and dignity.**

# Closing Prayer

God of justice and courage,

You heard the daughters who demanded their inheritance.

You saw the women who carried liberation in every generation.

Give us the strength to tell our stories honestly, the wisdom to see the systems that shape our lives, and the courage to imagine something better.

May our truth become testimony.

May our testimony become power.

And may that power help build a world where dignity, freedom, and abundance belong to all.

Amen.



