

## 2.19.23 Mini Sermon

# Black Harry & the Hoosiers

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

harry, indiana, celebrate, enslaved, black, protest, mindset, america, methodist, february, black history month, continued, heard, eastern corridor, history, celebration, hoosier state, humility, recite, left

### SPEAKERS

Rev. James Bady

#### **Rev. James Bady** 00:00

Good morning! It's great to see you. As we talk a little bit about Black History, and as we celebrate and worship in all the different forms that God has given to us, I have the privilege to share that part today. So, I want to take us through one of the traditions of Black History to open up.

Is there anyone here from Indiana? No one's claiming they're from Indiana, today. You lived there? For 10 years, next door? All right, all right we're getting closer. What do they call people from Indiana? Hoosiers, right? Do you know where that name came from? Some people say it's from a movie about basketball, while others claim it's because they "would never want a native-born inhabitant." There are all these thoughts about where the nickname for Indiana comes from. Keep this in mind as I tell you about a Methodist evangelist named Harry Moser, who was also known as Black Harry.

Black Harry was born in the early 1700s as a slave but eventually gained his freedom and moved to Maryland. He then started working for a Methodist bishop as his driver, traveling from town to town. During those long rides, the bishop would recite long passages from the Bible, and Harry had an uncommon ability to memorize them and could just recite them at the drop of a hat.

Eventually, the bishop wanted to reach out to Black communities in the area as he traveled up and down the Eastern corridor. Harry was passionate in his speaking and moved both Black and white listeners to tears. He became so well known that Dr. Rush, a signer of the Constitution, called him the most profound order he had ever heard.

Harry continued his career as a Methodist preacher, on and on and on, and when he would preach there will be 1000s that will come from miles around to hear him. Black Harry was named Harry Moser. Harry as he continued upon his ministry was known not only for his power, but for his humility. However, as you can imagine, throughout this time in the 1780s, that humility in a Black man that was powerful, didn't get seen the same way.

When they went to ordain preachers, despite Harry's powerful preaching, he was excommunicated from the Methodist church because of his perceived arrogance, even though he was known for his humility. Some of the people who came to Christ as a result of his preaching left the East Coast and settled in the foothills of Indiana. These people were known as Hoosiers, and therefore Indiana became known as the Hoosier State.

Have you ever heard this story before? Have you ever heard of the impact? I hated driving through Indiana. I lived in Michigan and would drive to see my bride in Illinois. And we'll be glad to get through Indiana, but Indiana has a history with me. What I've just taken you through is a tradition within Black History Month that started in 1926.

In 1925, a gentleman by the name of Carter G. Woodson reflected on the 50 years since the sign of emancipation and its celebration on February 1. He was reminded of the fact that there was a mindset that still existed, that maybe the Civil War should have gone another way. There was a mindset that there were some in the country who took all and gave almost nothing. He wanted to expose the mindset that there were great Americans who were descendants of the formerly enslaved, who were impacting America in every way imaginable. Therefore, he created Negro History Week, celebrated in February because of Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the 13th Amendment all happening in February. This is why the week was selected.

In 1926, he sent out a press release to start explaining some of the contributions that the formerly enslaved had given to America. The outpouring of knowledge-seeking was overwhelming. He continued to push out information year after year, addressing the mindset. There was so much information that wanted to be celebrated. It morphed from a week to what we have now as a month. Since 1976, 50 years after its inauguration, every president has honored Black History Month. This is how we get to today. This is how all these things have come together.

But I don't want you to forget one thing, and that is that I hope you are not only an ally in the celebration, but also in the protest. Black History Month is a protest against a mindset that thinks history in progress should have gone another way. It is a celebration and a protest that says some only take from America and never give. It is a protest against any mindset that says African-Americans are not present and presenting to the greatness of America. This is Black History Month, and I hope that each and every one of you will find it within yourself to be an ally, not only to celebrate but also to participate in the protest that it is.