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Former Vice President Joe Biden addressed the faith-based anti-poverty group the Poor People's Campaign at a virtual event on Sept. 14, telling its members, "I want to be part of your movement."

The gathering, which operated under the theme "Voting is power unleashed," focused on poverty and voter mobilization, a major thrust of the original Poor People's Campaign first organized by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s.

Biden opened his speech by declaring, "Together we can carry on Dr. King's Poor People's Campaign, which is based on a simple, moral truth: That we're all created in the image of God, and everyone's entitled to be treated with dignity and respect."

The appearance by a major candidate was a significant achievement for the Poor People's Campaign, which first hosted several Democratic presidential candidates in Washington, D.C., for a forum in June of 2019. At the time, the Rev. William Barber II and his Poor People's Campaign co-chair, the Rev. Liz Theoharis, repeatedly pressed candidates to focus on poverty.

Biden appeared to refer to the 2019 gathering in his remarks on Monday, saying, "I promised you that we'd not only talk about [poverty], but that we'd do something about it together."

Barber said the Trump campaign had been invited to participate in the virtual gathering but had not responded.

The Democratic nominee, who looked to be speaking from his familiar online setting in his Wilmington, Delaware, home, argued that having a job is "about more than a paycheck," but also about "dignity and respect." By way of example, he told a story of his family living in the "equivalent of Section 8 housing" while growing up.

He insisted that anyone who has "felt any taste of this, tasted this lack of respect, tasted this lack of opportunity, tasted being poor, tasted of what it feels like, understands what you're doing."

Woven through his address were references to being tested in the wilderness, an apparent reference to the account in the Gospel of Luke of Jesus being tempted by Satan before beginning his ministry. Calling the United States a "nation in the wilderness," Biden noted how the coronavirus has killed "nearly 200,000 of our loved ones, friends, neighbors, innocent souls, mostly people in the poor community who have been exposed, who have no ways to hide."

He cited the scene from Luke as a call to action. "All of you remind me of how Scripture describes a calling born out of the wilderness. A calling to serve, not to be served. A calling toward justice, healing, hope — not hate. To speak the good news, and followed by some good deeds. It's not just enough to speak the good news, but good deeds."

Biden also used biblical language to criticize his opponents. "We have leaders who bear false witness, who want us to believe that our country [hasn't] gone off track," he said.

Biden discussed his plans to raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour, allow for universal paid sick leave, give first-time home buyers a $15,000 tax credit, and approach housing as "a right" to help end homelessness.

"Ending poverty will not just be an aspiration, it will be a theory of change to build a new economy that includes everyone," he said.

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