

Racism and the Church Pt.2

Eradicating racism as a social injustice is not at the heart of the gospel, nor is it the goal of the gospel. But a church that is centered upon the gospel bears the fruit of brotherly love among all races or ethnicities.

In our Biblical Theology of Race Life Group class we are learning what the biblical story tells us about race. It is through this understanding that we can better apply our lives to love mercy, do justly, and walk humbly with our God toward all peoples for the fruit of racial unity.

There are five specifics about what we can do to pursue faith and repentance as a gospel centered church in regard to the fruit of racial unity - **Learn, Pray, Acknowledge, Relate and Commit**. Last week we looked at Learning.

You can read that article [here](#). We summarized our need to learn by saying: In all our learning we should aim to better understand our presuppositions, actions or inactions, our history and our context. If we are unaware of our presuppositions, lack knowledge of the history of racism in the churches, and have failed to scrutinize how our context may have unwittingly influenced our attention to and understanding of how the Bible speaks to this issue, we will be hampered in our consideration, discussion, interactions, and the activities of our lives to live out the gospel in a manner that accurately reflects our knowledge of and communion with our God and his people.

Prayer

This week we are considering Prayer. Our hope is that Christ Covenant Church will grow as a church that is not divided in regard to race, but one that tells the story of God's love for all people as we trust God through prayer.

We're reminded by the apostle Paul that Jesus is the only one who can break down the walls that divide us and make peace. He says in Ephesians 2:14, "For he himself is our peace, who made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility." For those in the church, Jewish or Gentile, black or white, slave or free, or whatever we use in our flesh to make hostile divisions of hating and being hated, he has "broken down". That is a past tense verb. He, the Prince of Peace, has made peace where there was hostility, hatred, and brokenness. How did he do this?

In verse 15 he says, "he abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace." "Making peace" is done by the one who is our peace in verse 14. Therefore, taking two people that are divided by hostility and hatred and making them one in a relationship of peace is a work done outside of those people. Paul says that work is an abolishing work. One people say if you are going to be acceptable to God and to me, you have to do these things. Another people says if you are going to be acceptable to my god and me you have to do or not do these things. But God sends his own Son to accomplish everything that makes a person acceptable to himself fulfilling all righteousness, and all who put their faith in him are acceptable to God. And if you're acceptable to God then you can accept others who are different than yourself without having to make them like you. God makes a way for us to be right with him without the law and it's ordinances. It's called a righteousness by faith that is apart from the law although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it (Romans 3:21). And the people who live by faith in Jesus and are made the righteousness of God having all their sins forgiven, are a people who do not demand others be like them to be acceptable. This is a creative work of God in the heart of his children. He's creating in himself one new man and woman in place of the two (Eph.2:15). The peace comes when a people live this reality. And the only way this becomes a reality is to realize and live this reality from the heart. This requires we see it took the cross to accomplish it and to continue to produce it's results.

The cross of Jesus is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16), and it is the power of God for the fruit of that salvation in our lives, the reconciliation of divided races (Ephesians 2:16). God put forward his Son to be killed so that he might save many people from all ethnicity alive, killing the hostility that divides ethnicity. The cross is the power for racial unity. It is the cross that demonstrates the love of God for a cursed humanity (Romans 5:8). It is the love of God demonstrated in the cross that melts the hearts of this divided humanity to be reconciled to

love one another in loving deeds of mercy and in doing justly and not oppressing one another, as they walk humbly together with God. But what does this have to do with prayer for our church telling the story of God's love for all people? Paul gives us a hint in his second letter to the church at Thessalonica;

“To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

The work of the power of the gospel in the church happens through prayer. Praying is the most powerful thing we can do. We will have neither the ability nor the desire to enter into the conversation about racial unity without the grace of God powerfully at work in us. So pray! If we want to be filled with the fullness of God for the fruit of racial unity (Ephesians 4:1-3), then we must pray that we will know deeply the love of God (Ephesians 3:14-19). And if we are to know deeply the love of God then we must see this with the eyes of hearts in the gospel of God (Ephesians 1:15-23). So pray! The gospel that powerfully works in our hearts for salvation is the gospel that works powerfully in our lives for the fruit of racial unity. And we say, ‘I know that [the gospel] already!’, while we do not love our brothers and sisters who are different than we are. Therefore, we must pray that we may know what we say we “already know.” The fruit of racial unity in our churches and community are impossible with us, but not with God. Let us pray for a movement of the gospel in our hearts and church.

Here are some suggestions for prayers of confession, thankfulness and hope.

Praise God as the one true God, creator of all humanity, maker of every person of every tribe, tongue, people and nation, in His own image.

Praise God for his saving plan to make out of all peoples and nations, one people, a people for himself.

Praise God that at the consummation of human history, men and women and boys and girls, from all the world in every corner, from every tribe, tongue, people and nation, who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, who have believed the Gospel and trusted Christ, who have been saved by sovereign grace, adopted into God's household, made members of Christ's body, will worship God and the Lamb, forever,

Praise God that in some measure the church visible now bears witness to that future reality.

Thank God for your African American brothers and sisters in Christ, and for every ethnicity that is part of the church visible. “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight.”

Thank God that there is a reawakening of Reformed Theology in the African American community.

Thank God that he is raising up outstanding African American Reformed preachers in our generation.

Thank God for the increasing ethnic diversity in the PCA that has grown up because of the power of the Gospel, the work of the Spirit and our union with Christ.

Thank God that our denomination's founding fathers wanted a church for all peoples and that as the PCA approaches fifty years old we are closer to that aspiration than we were in 1973.

Confess whatever your own personal and congregational sins and failures may be, whether by omission or commission, pertaining to loving our African American brothers and sisters in Christ.

Grieve and lament that the evangelical branch of the Presbyterian tradition from which we come fell so short of the Bible and Reformed Theology in our treatment of people of different ethnicities, especially African Americans, even in the church: barring them from worship attendance and church membership, misusing and twisting the Bible to support racial segregation; failing to show solidarity with and support for African American brothers and sisters in Christ as they endured various kinds of discrimination and duress in the Civil Rights era.

Grieve the consequences of this for our own day and ask the Lord to open your eyes to blindspots and behavior that continue to cause us to fall short of our biblical duties towards fellow believers of different ethnicities, especially African Americans.

Ask that God, by grace, would grant an extraordinary work of racial healing and reconciliation among believers, and that our past failures would not hinder present ministry.

Ask God that by the Holy Spirit he would break down barriers that separate us from one another and create the unity that ought to be exhibited within the body of Christ.

Ask God that the real, biblical, Gospel, Holy Spirit-wrought, racial reconciliation in our church might be a powerful witness to the culture around us that would cause even unbelievers to say: “surely God is among them.”

Ask God to bless the ministries of faithful, Bible-believing African American pastors, especially PCA pastors, as well as those of other ethnic minorities.

Ask God that your words, actions, and attitudes would be encouraging to your African American brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as to other ethnic minorities.

Ask God to grant his heart and help to the PCA and other solid biblical churches so that we would do a better job of reaching out to African Americans, and other ethnic minorities, with the Gospel.

Ask God to so work in us congregationally by his sanctifying Holy Spirit that ethnic minority attenders and members of our churches will feel welcome, loved, at home and part of the family.

Ask for God to raise up more African American (and other ethnic minority) pastors, missionaries, church planters, seminary and college professors, campus ministers, elders, deacons, women in the church leaders, and ministerial candidates in the PCA. Pray for minority leadership at the congregational, presbytery, and denominational levels.

Our Father, You are the one, true God who made the world and everything in it, Acts 17:24-26

You are the Lord of heaven and earth, You give to all mankind life and breath and everything.

And you made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth

You made us to seek you and worship you, Acts 17:27; John 4:23;

But we sought ourselves instead and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator, And so we were estranged from You, Romans 1:25 Genesis 11:8-9; And estranged from one another, like the people of the plain of Shinar.

Yet in your grace, you not only created, called and saved your people Israel, but also promised that your covenant with Abraham would mean blessings for all the families of the earth. Genesis 12:3

Through Jesus Christ you brought the blessings of Abraham to the Gentiles, And you made Jew and Gentile into one new man, your people, your church. And at the end of time, a multitude none can number, from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation will all be your people in one body worshipping the one true God, through one savior, Jesus Christ, by the power of one Holy Spirit. Grant that we would long for that, and look like that more. Now. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Catalyst Planning

We have completed the first phase of Catalyst Planning 2019. We met for three consecutive Wednesdays to brainstorm ideas and write goals. The goals that have been written are available for you to see in a document entitled “Catalyst Planning Goals 2019. Our next step will be the prioritizing of these goals and developing both a short and long range strategy for accomplishing these goals. This next phase of our Catalyst Planning will take place beginning in September.

We would like to express our gratitude for all those who participated in our the first phase of our Catalyst Planning. We had over 45 people joining in on the sharing of ideas and writing of goals each of the three nights.

We also want to express our gratitude to our facilitators and Idea Organizers. These individuals gave time and talent in preparation for our meetings as well as leading our meetings: Andy Markle, Debbie Davis, Jordan & Makala Smith, Peter & Samantha Wilkerson, Lawton Greenwood, Joe Timmons, Jay & Diana Anderson, Ben & Lori Wilkerson, Scott Dinkins, Bob & Jana Daley, Judy Thomason, Sharon Worthy-Boyd, and Brad Carnahan.

Finally, as we continue through this process we need to acknowledge and express our gratitude for Bruce Braswell. Bruce has and continues to be a great blessing as he uses his talents, gifts, and time to generously lead our church through the Catalyst process.

Be on the look out for announcements concerning our next phase of Catalyst Planning coming in September.