

Race, Politics, and the Gospel - Leveraging Our Lives for Good Bart Box

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³² It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32)

What Can We Do?

- We can pray.

- Certainly, we can hide behind prayer as an excuse for inaction.

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (James 2:15-16)

- But prayer as a response accords racism the full weight of evil it embodies.

- We can live a quiet, godly life.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

- We gravitate to the flashy, but most effective is the faithful, ordinary obedience that God commends.
- We should give ourselves to "a long obedience in the same direction" (Eugene Peterson).

When younger people say, "You need to do something" (whatever that something may be), they are often thinking about doing something online (making a statement, joining a hashtag, posting a symbolic gesture), and that's one way to do something. But praying is also doing something. Educating yourself is also doing something. Raising kids in the fear and admonition of the Lord is also doing something. Giving money in secret is also doing something. Correcting and encouraging others in private is also doing something. Teaching and preaching and praying in public is also doing something. Being salt and light in the work place is also doing something. We should not think that the digital world is the only one that counts or that it is most important. (Kevin DeYoung)

- We can strive for virtue, not virtue signaling.

- Solidarity with others on matters of justice *is good*.
- Also good is the development of virtue, character, and moral strength.
- Our motives and hearts matter before the Lord.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. ¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! (2 Peter 3:10-12)

- Give yourself to *being* before *doing* (or, being as you are doing).

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? (Luke 10:36)

- We can guard against both defensiveness and carelessness.

- We can be overly defensive.

- As Christians, we should certainly recognize the possibility that racism can move beyond the human heart and into systems, human governments, laws, organization.
- We should affirm the category of sins beyond personal sins.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

We do not have to believe we are as bad as we've ever been to acknowledge that we aren't what we can be. (Kevin DeYoung)

- We can be overly accusatory.

[We reject the] profoundly distorted view of [our] country... that sees white racism as endemic, and that elevates what is wrong with America above all that we know is right with America. (Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union")

- We can learn for the sake of deeper empathy.

- We benefit from knowing more black history.
- It's simply good to know about and hear about the history, the struggles, the fears, the hopes, and the dreams of other people.

[*An Annotated Bibliography on Race*](#)

- We can seek to diversify our church by diversifying our lives.

- We should be open to all sorts of changes and modifications on lesser matters.
- We can relationally diversify our lives.

- We can be an advocate and actor for justice.

- Justice is not a liberal talking point or even the special province of socially progressive churches.
- Justice is biblical.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you. (Psalm 89:14)

God loves justice, and he finds injustice, which predominately visits the defenseless, an abomination. God's special people should share that love and passion. (Jonathan Leeman)

- Remember, we can't fix everything, and we should be careful about enjoining on others unreasonable and unsustainable burdens.

There simply aren't enough hours in the day to do everything we are told we must do. I refuse to believe that obedience to Christ requires a 35-hour day. I have to attend to my primary vocation—which is to first be a happy and holy follower of Christ, then to be a husband and father, and then to be a faithful pastor (and there are actually quite a few hats I have to wear after that). We should feel guilty for disobeying the commands of Scripture; we should not feel guilty for not living the life someone else wants us to live. (Kevin DeYoung)

- But we should be engaged on justice somehow.

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷ learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. (Isaiah 1:16-17)

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:14-18)