

## Racial Reconciliation

1.14.2018 Eph 2:11-22 Bland Mason

**BIG Idea: Jesus reconciles the races in his kingdom.**

### INTRODUCTION

- Two years ago, Teresa and I were attending an Acts29 Church Planting network pastors/wives retreat. This is a time for Acts29 leaders to be refreshed and to refocus on stuff that is important to our network. One of the core things Acts29 wants to be known for is being a radically diverse and global community. So, this retreat was about Racial Reconciliation.
- During one of our sessions, Matt Chandler, the president of Acts29, invited up a group of Black pastors from our network to speak on a panel. **PICTURE ON SCREEN** This panel wasn't focused on what was currently happening in our country or even the solutions moving forward. This panel was to let these men have a chance to share their PERSONAL understanding and experience so that the other majority white pastors could hear and understand. We'll post the link to the full session on our Facebook page this week.  
[http://www.acts29.com/race\\_reconciliation/](http://www.acts29.com/race_reconciliation/)
- I sat there for an hour listening to these men recount not just ideas about racism but their personal experiences of racism. One shared about the bricks thrown through the windows of their childhood home because they had moved into a mostly white neighborhood. Another shared about when he was 12 his father had to coach him about how to not be intimidating because he was a large black kid. He explained to him that because of his size people would look at him different so he had to learn to be small and unassuming in his demeanor. Another shared about in the last few years being pulled over by police twice and one of those times being removed from the car and being asked to stand back next to the police cruiser so the cop could go up and talk to his white wife. He asked her, "Are you ok, maam? Do you feel safe? Are you here of your own free will?"
- I will never forget the feeling that came over me realizing how different their experiences were than mine. Not once in my lifetime had I had someone profile me as a large white man. Not once in my lifetime have I had a cop pull me over because I was a white guy in the wrong neighborhood. Not once has someone thrown something through my window because they didn't want me in the neighborhood.
- I was shaken by that experience but I am grateful for it. My understanding of racism in our country was always "out there" and while I saw it, I felt disconnected from it. It was real but it didn't feel personal. Hearing these men share with broken voices full of pain made an impact I am grateful for.
- For many years I felt like racism was something out there and I was doing my part to end it by not being a racist. What I didn't understand is the history and the underlying culture of racism meant that it was still shaping our world in very real ways today. And that while I have the luxury of forgetting that racism still exists in contemporary America, black people, Latino people, Asian people, Native American people, and every other non-white people in our country CAN'T forget it. And this isn't just "out there" somewhere.
- Recently local Brookline High School students were video taped using racial slurs and some racial graffiti was found in the school. The Brookline Police have had experiences of racial remarks within their ranks.
- This is all part of a larger racial problem in our city. When I left Louisville, Kentucky for Boston, the last thing I expected was to find a city marked by racism. But that is exactly what is here. The Boston Globe's Spotlight division recently wrote a series of articles highlighting the racism in our city.
- Google the phrase "Most racist city," and Boston pops up more than any other place, time and time again.
- A national survey commissioned by the Globe this fall found that among eight major cities, black people ranked Boston as least welcoming to people of color [among African Americans]. More than half — 54 percent — rated Boston as unwelcoming. **CHART ON SCREEN**

- And this is reality for MANY non-white people in our midst: “To be a black person in Boston, is [often] to be the only one. . . . The only one in the office; the only one in the leadership position. It’s lonely,” said 45-year-old Bridgit Brown of Dorchester, a communications specialist. “You’re aware of the racism. You’re aware of the subtleties. It’s like the air we breathe, if you’re black.” --Boston Globe Spotlight Series, [“Boston. Racism. Image. Reality.”](#)
- So, what is the hope? Last week we started a series called “Kingdom Prayers.” We are setting aside this month to focus on praying for Jesus’ kingdom to come in our lives, in the life of our church, and in our city. Last week we focused on the Lord’s prayer and what it means to pray for God’s kingdom and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. I hope you were able to use our prayer guide this last week. If not, we have some more in the back and can email you a copy.
- Kingdom prayers are really about praying for Jesus to reveal his kingdom in this world. A kingdom marked by healing the broken, helping the hurting, reconciling people, and restoring all the damage sin has wrought in our world. That’s why its worth praying everyday of your life, “Jesus, may your kingdom come.”
- This week we want to focus on one of the manifestations of the kingdom coming: racial reconciliation. This is an especially hot topic right now in the life of our country and one that Christians should not shy away from. The Kingdom of God coming among Jesus’ people doesn’t mean it is simply for them to experience. As the kingdom comes it spills over onto those who are in proximity.
- To put it simply the kingdom is a movement. As those who have been brought into the kingdom live out their lives with the power and presence of Jesus, they begin to reveal to the world what life is like in Jesus’ kingdom. That’s what today’s text in Eph 2:11-22 is all about. It shows what Jesus’ kingdom does where there are racism and division.
- BIG Idea: Jesus reconciles the races in his kingdom.**
- Why focus on prayer, then? Why not just go DO racial reconciliation? Jesus taught us to pray for the kingdom to come and in doing so, the kingdom begins to come in us. God has ordained for kingdom to come through the prayers of his people. And prayer always leads to subsequent action.
- It is God’s kingdom, but he invites us to get involved through prayer. I shared the story last week of helping my dad work around the house or on the car when I was little. Whether it was hammering or tightening a bolt, he would let me put my hand to the tool and then he would do the work.
- When we pray, we put our hand to the wrench and God does the work. We participate in what HE is doing through prayer and our subsequent actions.
- So, **What are kingdom prayers for racial reconciliation?**
- 1. Prayer for greater understanding of the need for it.**
- God created us in his image... sin unraveled humanity.
- Ephesians 2:12 *“Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*
- Back in Ephesians 2:1–2 *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.*
- We have all been a part of the unraveling of humanity. Hatred in human heart is the seed that has grown into every act of violence in history, including racism. If we don’t recognize that we ALL NEED new hearts, then in our pride we will see the problem with the world as with other people. Seeing our own hearts, allows us to begin to understand why there is EVEN a need for racial reconciliation.
- So racism exists because people need new hearts. God didn’t make us to hate each other and value other people by the color of their skin but sin has divided humanity. We hurt each other, we judge each other, we devalue other people because they are not like us, and we long for our way. It is no wonder racist

motivated acts are found ALL over the world.

- But it isn't just about individual racist acts but larger, cultural systemic racism. It is easier for many to look at racism through the grid of racist acts. So, when someone on TV who is discriminated against, it is easy to identify it and label it racism. It is much harder to grasp all the ways systemic racism is at work.
- In his book "*White Awake*," Daniel Hill, lays out 4 interlocking facets of racism, which make it far more pernicious and destructive than a few bad people committing some bad acts.
  - 1) *Racism reflects a social construct created for the purposes of consolidating white power.*
  - 2) *Racism is an extension of the ideology of white supremacy, a doctrine that paints white people as inherently superior to people from all other racial groups.*
  - 3) *A narrative of racial difference was created to support this ideology of white superiority, which measures human value based on proximity to whiteness.*
  - 4) *The narrative of racial difference—both historically and currently—infests systems and structures, thus perpetuating racial inequality throughout society.*  
*Only when we view racism through all four of these lenses do we appreciate the depth of its power and pervasiveness of its presence."*
- Now, we don't have time to even begin to unpack what each of these mean but what it helped me with his to see how racism works systemically as opposed to individually. It is prevalent on many levels in our society.
- ILL- One example of this is the well-known [Jamal and Lakisha study](#), in which researchers sent identical résumés to numerous companies all over the U.S. The *only thing* they changed on the résumé was the name. They used common "white" names (e.g., Greg and Emily) or common "black" names (Jamal and Lakisha). The researchers found that when name on the résumé was Emily or Greg, the hiring managers at the company were 50% more likely to invite Emily or Greg in for an interview than when the résumé name was Jamal or Lakisha.
- This story gets at White privilege – something I didn't really understand until a few years ago. I understood that there were socio-economic differences between white and black people. And I wasn't naïve to think that the history of racism in our country had something to do with it but I just didn't understand my position in it. Because I was born white, in a home with two college educated parents, and never would be judged by the color of my skin, I experienced white privilege.
- I carried this into high school where I had some black friends and hung out but never understood some of the fundamental realities they had to deal with that I didn't.
- When it came to planting a church in Boston, I wanted to plant a multi-ethnic church that represented the community racially and in other ways. What I didn't understand was that by planning everything through my white majority lens, I made it harder for a non-white person to be a part of CoaH. It wasn't anything intentional but I subtly told any non-white visitor, we are glad you are here, please check your culture and your preferences at the door.
- By God's grace I've grown to see things more clearly but I still have more to learn. My kingdom prayer related to this is that Jesus would let his kingdom come in me by helping me to see the need for racial reconciliation more clearly.

## **2. Prayer for greater awareness of how it needs to come.**

- When the kingdom comes among a people racial reconciliation happens but it is not something that just happens when people try. For the Jews and Gentiles in the church at Ephesus, the message from Paul was not, "You need to try to get along" or "you're in the church together now, so come together and forget all your differences." No, he explains how racial reconciliation happens...
- Ephesians 2:13–18 [13] *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. [14] 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.*

- The unity between Jews and Gentiles was not something that they made happen. It was not something that they produced. It was a REALITY brought about by Jesus:
  - V.14 Jesus “made us both one” – the Greek word *Kainos* - means of a new kind, unprecedented, novel, uncommon, unheard of.
  - V.14 Jesus “broke down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility”
  - V.15 Jesus did it by “abolishing the law of commandments” (Jewish laws kept out Gentile people)
  - V.15 Jesus “created in himself one new man in place of the two”
  - V.16 Jesus “reconciled us both to God...through the cross, thereby killing hostility”
  - V.17 Jesus gave “both access in one Spirit to the Father.”
- Every Christian who has ever lived is reconciled to every other Christian who has ever lived BECAUSE of Jesus and what he has done through the cross. Then, it is not that Christians need to find a way to come together. It is that Christians need to press into this kingdom reality already purchased by Jesus.
- Not by walking in white guilt. Paul didn’t say, the way that Jews and Gentiles will be reconciled is by Jews walking around feeling guilty for having mistreated Gentiles.
- It is NOT by being color blind – That discounts the unique way God made people and the beauty that their culture brings. It says to a black person, “I don’t think of you as black.” Or an Asian person, “The fact that your Asian is not important.” That’s not the answer.
- The picture of the kingdom is not that the differences are gone but that in the kingdom all the differences are brought together into a mosaic called the church.
- So, then if Jesus’ makes it possible for racial reconciliation in his kingdom, what should we pray for now? We pray for grace to move forward with honesty knowing that Jesus has already paid the price to bring us together.
- Kingdom prayer means praying for people to see the image of God in each other. *"This is why the sin of racism is so serious. The system of race, at its core, is a revaluation of human worth. Instead of ordering human value around the doctrine of the imago Dei, it ascribes value based on proximity to whiteness."* -White Awake, Daniel Hill
- Kingdom praying means being honest about what has happened and what the situation is. You can’t have honest reconciliation without recognition of what has happened. Just like a husband can’t reconcile with his wife after committing adultery unless he can be honest about the adultery. In this case, it is a recognition of systemic racism.
- Kingdom prayer means praying we listen well to each other. Let me say this as clear as I can: It's on white people to go ask questions and understand personal journeys of African Americans and other minorities. Ask people of other races, what has your experience with racism been? What has it been like to be at CoaH? Have you given anything up to be at CoaH?
- Kingdom prayer means recognizing racism is a kingdom issue and when races are disparaged, our brothers and sisters are being disparaged. Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission said this week: “The church of Jesus Christ is led by, among others, our brothers and sisters from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. They are us.”
- The good news is that Jesus’ death has ushered in a kingdom where ALL of this is possible. Quick, tiny glimpse. City on a Hill is a part of a Boston area network of churches that pictures this: [GBBA Map](#)
- The fruit of the kingdom we see here and in our own church is just a tiny taste of what Jesus died for. It’s like

the pink sampling spoon at the Ice Cream place. They give you a tiny sample so you can taste it. IT's good but there is SO MUCH MORE to be had!

- Let's not be satisfied with the fact that there is some diversity in this room. Let's pray for more. Let's seek more. God has promised to bring the kingdom through our prayers. Let us not spend more time complaining about racism than we do praying for Jesus to bring his kingdom and end racism.
- Pray for greater awareness of what needs to happen for the kingdom to come and bring racial reconciliation.

### **3. Prayer for greater love and compassion to flow in and through you.**

- When the kingdom comes in yours and my life, we will be marked by greater love for others BUT it is seen especially in the love for those who are least like you. Why? Because Jesus came to bring people together who would NOT be together otherwise.
- And they aren't just together in proximity but in equality. They aren't just a group of people but members of the kingdom. They aren't simply friends but family.
- Ephesians 2:19–22 *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*
- When you belong to each other, you are full of love for each other, you are full of compassion for each other, and it grieves you when you see your family demeaned on account of the color of their skin.
- ILL – I thought about this week when our president made statements about Haitian and other immigrants. Absolutely morally reprehensible! It grieved me for friends I know. A few years ago I was able to go to Haiti. I was simultaneously broken for the country and the severe poverty I saw there and deeply encouraged by the people. As I met with a group of pastors and taught them I was deeply encouraged by the resilience and hospitality of Haitian people. Even this week I was moved by compassion for the Haitian people.
- But we don't need to just have compassion for those who are far away or on the news. We need to have compassion for each other around us. One of the ways you can do that is if you are white, be ok with being uncomfortable with our worship at times and REJOICE that at that very moment someone different than you is feeling a little more at home. Generally speaking when it comes to multi-ethnic worship, white people have to move the least distance to participate. More of their values and preferences are present. For other races, they have to move farther, so if you are white and you value being a part of a multi-ethnic church, be ready to sacrifice some preferences.
- And for those of you who have sacrificed so much to be a part of CoaH, thank you for being here. Let me plead with you to be patient. You might get inundated with white folks asking you to dinner this week and asking you questions but hang in there. We are growing.
- We are going to pray in just a moment but let's let this kingdom vision lead us to do a FEW small steps.
  1. 13<sup>th</sup> Showing & Discussion – Feb 2 (7pm) – Documentary highlights the new Jim Crow laws and why there are more African Americans incarcerated right now than there were slaves in the U.S. in the 1850s.
  2. MLK50: Gospel Reflections from the Mountaintop will take place in Memphis, TN –April 3-4. The pastors are going and taking a group from CoaH. If you are interested, check for info on our app or website.
  3. Q&A time down the hall next to the Connection Café after this service – I'll be there. Come share.

PRAY – KINGDOM PRAYER FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Intro communion

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