

Working for Racial Unity and Reconciliation

Part 3, 6'21'20

Two weeks ago, we began looking at the issue of racial unity and reconciliation. I am sharing what I am thinking, feeling, and doing in the midst of the racial and cultural divide in our nation. We need to do better as a country. It is not enough to say that I am not racist. We are called to work for justice, to pursue mercy, and to work humbly toward overcoming oppression (Isaiah 1:17 ESV, Micah 6:8 ESV), especially of black people.

We began this series by looking at 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, because I believe in Jesus, in his leadership, and in his power to reconcile all things to God, including heaven, earth, and people. It is through the help, hope, and leadership of Jesus that we can work effectively toward racial unity and reconciliation.

In Part 1 and 2, I shared what I currently think and believe about racial unity and reconciliation.

Today is part 3 of this series on *Working for Racial Unity and Reconciliation*.

Here are some of the beliefs which are sustaining me, informing me, and helping me to live in faith, rather than in hopelessness and despair. These beliefs help me to live in the hope-filled presence of the Lord rather than in fear or discouragement.

1. **God is on his throne.**
 - a. Read Psalm 2:1-8 NIV.
 - b. *The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. 11 But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations (Psalm 33:10-11 NIV).*
 - c. **God is ruling heaven and earth, and we know where to go for help (Hebrews 4:16). The center of the universe is a throne of grace where we find grace and help in our time of need.**
 - d. Perspective is everything. When I come into the Lord's presence, I can see more clearly. (See the Lord's Prayer, which begins by recognizing and praising "Our Father who is in heaven..." (Matthew 6:9).
 - e. Read Scriptures and remind yourself that God is on his throne.
2. **God is good (Psalm 100:5).**
 - a. *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations (Psalm 100:5 NIV).*

- b. *Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting. 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary... (Psalm 107:1-2 NASB77).*
 - c. I see the redemptive hand of God everywhere (Romans 8:28-29).
 - i. *But Joseph said to [his brothers], "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Genesis 50:19-20 ESV).*
 - d. Let us declare that:
 - i. God is good.
 - ii. God is with us; he will not leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).
 - iii. God can take everything that comes our way and work it for good for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28-29).
 - iv. God is in control and has a plan for our lives (Jeremiah 29:11-14).
3. **God is righteous and just** (Psalm 89:14).
- a. *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. 15 Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD. 16 They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness. 17 For you are their glory and strength, and by your favor you exalt our horn. 18 Indeed, our shield belongs to the LORD, our king to the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 89:14-18 NIV).*
 - b. **Righteousness.**
 - i. God's righteousness is what God does in fulfillment of the terms of the covenant that God established with his people.
 - ii. God's righteousness is understood in relation to the image of God as the Judge of created order (Psalm 96:13). God's judgments are consistently redemptive in nature. God's judgments protected, delivered, and restored Israel (Isaiah 11:4-5). At times God's righteousness was experienced in God's delivering Israel from enemies and oppressors (Psalm 71); at other times, in God's delivering Israel from the nation's own sinfulness (Psalm 51:19). Such deliverance involved God's righteousness of wrath against the persecutor and the wicked (Psalm 106). Salvation and correction exist together as the two sides of God's righteousness; the leading side is always deliverance. God judges only because He also saves (Psalm 97).
 - iii. Righteousness is about treating others according to the God-given dignity they deserve.

- c. **Justice.**
 - i. Justice has to do with God wanting us to treat others rightly as image bearers.
 - ii. Justice goes further by seeking out vulnerable people who are being taken advantage of and taking steps to help them. Justice also involves changing social structures to prevent injustice.
 - iii. Justice has two major aspects. First, it is the standard by which penalties are assigned for breaking the obligations of the society. That is punitive justice. Second, justice is the standard by which the blessings of social life are handed out, including material goods, rights of participation, opportunities, blessings, and liberties. That is restorative justice.
 - iv. It is the standard for both punishment and restoration and thus can be spoken of as a plumb line. "I shall use justice as a plumb-line, and righteousness as a plummet" (Isaiah 28:17).
 - d. Righteousness and justice are about a radical, selfless way of life.
 - i. Proverbs 31:8-9 NIV
 - ii. Jeremiah 22:3 NIV
 - iii. Psalm 146:7-9 NIV
 - e. God is righteous and just, and he calls us to live radically selfless lives, to treat others according to their God-given dignity, and to work for the blessing of others.
4. **God is at work bringing restoration and making all things new** (Acts 3:17-21; Revelation 21:5).
- a. *Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working" (John 5:17 NIV).* I believe that. God has not abandoned us to ourselves, to the enemy, nor to the broken world.
 - b. God does his work through you and me (Philippians 2:12-13; Matthew 5:13-16).
 - i. For example, our nation is wounded. We get to be agents of healing and blessing.
 - ii. We have made progress in our culture dealing with systemic injustice; and we have a long way to go. So, let's do our part to learn, to listen, and to advocate for change and breakthrough.
 - c. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV).*
 - i. Because of Jesus, we are a part of the kingdom of God and his new creation work.
 - ii. We get to share and demonstrate what has changed in us and in this world because of Jesus.
 - iii. And, we get to partner with the Lord to work for restoration.

5. **God is reconciling the world to himself, and he has given to us the ministry and message of reconciliation** (2 Corinthians 5:14-21).
 - a. Paul saw the need for reconciliation of humans to oneself, other people, and the environment; but his chief interest was in a person being reconciled to God.
 - i. When Paul spoke of reconciliation between God and a person, [God did not have to change] His attitude toward humanity. God was not angry at humanity. He did not demand satisfaction be given by someone because His honor and dignity had been degraded by a person or by humanity, nor did a person have to offer up sacrifice to placate His hostility.
 - ii. Paul did not hint that the attitudes of God and humanity were mutually antagonistic. Hostility and estrangement had its origin in humans. Mankind through indifference, active enmity, and passive hatred had rebelled against God and stood in need of being reconciled to Him. God's creatures defied the divine purpose for life and destroyed the fellowship for which they were intended. They substituted for the true foundation of fellowship a whole series of relationships which formed a kingdom of evil and promoted estrangement from God. Thus, all mankind came under the wrath of God (the situation that pertains when a person is alienated from God).
 - iii. The Sovereign Lord of the universe took the initiative in breaking down the estranging barrier between Himself and us (Holman Bible Dictionary).
 - b. Our reconciling God has given us his message and ministry of reconciliation.
6. **God is not color blind.**
 - a. God loves all tongues, tribes, languages, and people (Revelation 5:9).
 - b. The Lord will have diversity around his throne and in his church.
 - c. God shows no favoritism.
 - i. Yes, we are equal at the foot of the cross (Galatians 3:26-28).
 - ii. No one is better than someone else; no one race is better than another race.
 - d. **We are called to affirm our unity, to celebrate diversity, and to create harmony.**
7. **God has told us what is coming so that we may be overcomers and not victims.**
 - a. Jesus said, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33 NIV).

- b. The Amplified Bible says it this way: *"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.]" (John 16:33 AMP).*
 - c. Things are getting worse and worse, better and better, faster and faster (Isaiah 60:1-4).
 - i. In the midst of the darkness and chaos, the light of Jesus shining through his people will draw many into the kingdom of God.
 - ii. Evil and good come to full maturity at the end of the age (Matthew 13:24-30).
 - d. **Here is my perspective. I have hope in God and I have to look for what the Lord is doing, or I will fall into despair and hopelessness.** I choose to have faith in the Lord, or I know that I will give up and quit.
 - e. Through Christ Jesus, I am an overcomer, not a victim (1 John 5:4-5).
8. **Jesus is coming back to make all things right and we are to partner with him both now and then in his kingdom work** (Revelation 5:9-10).
- a. Jesus is at work in us today.
 - b. We are the body of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Jesus has strategically placed each of us in our spheres of influence
 - d. We were made for such a time as this.
 - e. This is our moment to shine (Isaiah 60:1-3; Matthew 5:13-16).
 - i. Let's partner with the Lord now in his work as ruler of heaven and earth, so that we might see his kingdom come and his will done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).
 - ii. Let's share what we are learning and how the Lord is changing us.
 - iii. Let's bring healing love and prayer to a world that is hurting.
 - iv. Let's be a voice for those who have no voice.

What can we do?

- 1. **Look to the Lord** (Hebrews 12:1-2; Colossians 3:1-4).
 - a. We are called to fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) and to set our affections and thoughts on things above, where Christ is (Colossians 3:1-2).
 - i. I know that sounds trite. You have heard this all of your life as a Christian-- to fix your eyes on Jesus.
 - ii. Why is that important? Because perspective is everything.

- b. Pay attention to what the Lord is saying and doing, not just what is being said in the news and in social media.
 - c. Find out what the Lord is doing and bless what he is doing (Psalm 72:15).
 - d. Ask the Lord for discernment, that you might see what he is doing.
 2. **Encourage yourself in the Lord**, like David did at Ziklag (1 Samuel 30:6) or in Psalm 23.
 - a. *When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. 4 So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. 5 David's two wives had been captured--Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 6 David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God (1 Samuel 30:3-6 NIV).*
 - b. Psalm 23
 - i. Look for the restoring presence of the Lord in the midst of this broken world.
 - ii. Look for the sustaining grace, protection, and presence of the Lord in the midst of the dark valleys of life.
 - iii. Look for the table of the Lord in the midst of your enemies.
 - iv. Look for the goodness and love of the Lord which is hunting you down.
3. **Pursue deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus** (Song of Songs 1:4; Matthew 4:19-25; 9:35-38; John 15:5; Revelation 5:9-10).
 - a. The Lord gave us this word for the year of 2020.
 - b. God began to speak to us about this word in March 2019, and we have been seeking to respond actively and passionately to what the Lord is saying and doing.
 - c. In the midst of this reset caused by the pandemic and social unrest, let us pursue deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus like never before.
4. **Watch and pray.**
 - a. Jesus tells us to pray and not to give up (Luke 18:1-8).
 - b. *This is why you must be waiting, watching and praying, because no one knows when that season of time will come" (Mark 13:33 PassionNTPsa).*
 - c. The command to watch and pray is not passive. We are to be alert, focused, paying attention, looking, and turning what we see and discern into prayer.
 - i. Let's commit ourselves to intercession for reconciliation and justice in our systems.

- ii. Let's pray for God to raise up deliverers like Moses, the judges, and people who have a voice.
 1. Lord, send us deliverers, and help us to be deliverers as well.
5. **Mourn with those who mourn and weep with those who weep** (Matthew 5:4; Romans 12:15).
 - a. Right now is the time to weep and mourn, not to give advice and tell those who are hurting what they should do and feel.
 - b. Right now, our whole world is already emotionally traumatized by the pandemic, and people are in pain from dealing with the virus and social unrest.
 - c. Those waves of grief you feel are real.
 - i. Sometimes we feel grief because of what we have lost in this pandemic and unrest.
 - ii. Sometimes we feel grief because God is letting us feel the losses others have experienced.
 - iii. Sometimes we mourn because of the wounds, traumas, and trials others are experiencing.
 - d. It is ok to cry and to pour out our tears to the Lord (Psalm 43:3-4; 62:8; 142:1-7). (See the book of Lamentations.)
6. **Turn to the Lord and ask him to change you, search you, and help you.**
 - a. **Repent, then, and turn to God**, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus (Acts 3:19-20 NIV).
 - b. *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9 NIV).*
 - c. Ask God to search your heart and life and to show you what you don't know (Psalm 139:23-24).
7. **Stand in the gap and build up the wall, swinging the pendulum from judgment to mercy** (Ezekiel 22:30; Isaiah 58:12).
 - a. *"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. 31 So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD" Ezekiel 22:30-31 NIV).*
 - b. *Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called **Repairer of Broken Walls**, **Restorer of Streets with Dwellings** (Isaiah 58:12 NIV).*
 - c. One way to stand in the gap and to build up the wall is through **identificational repentance**.

- i. There are a number of examples in Scripture of intercessors identifying with the sins of their forefathers and asking God for mercy.
 - ii. **See Daniel 9:1-11** for one such example.
 - d. What is your part? What is God asking you to do?
 - 8. **Fight the good fight of faith** (1 Timothy 6:12).
 - a. We wrestle not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:10-18).
 - b. There is a principality of fear that attached itself to COVID-19.
 - c. There is a principality of racism that is at work in our nation.
 - d. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 NIV
 - i. We ask the Lord to expose the spirits behind what is happening and to cut off their influence.
 - ii. We cut off the supply lines of fear and hatred that are feeding and fueling activities and decisions in our nation. In its place we loose love, healing, kindness, mercy, and grace.
 - iii. We pull down lies and strongholds that hold people in bondage and hinder their knowing and experiencing the Lord.
 - 9. **Choose to put your hope and faith in God**, not in economic systems, governmental systems, political solutions.
 - a. Those who hope in God will not be disappointed (Isaiah 49:23).
 - b. Let's put our hope in Jesus while working for change and demonstrating the kingdom of God in justice and righteousness in the systems of society.
 - i. Our hope is not in fixing things nor is in changing our culture, nation, or systems. Our hope is in partnering with Jesus in what he is doing in our culture, nation, and systems.
 - ii. For example, the Scriptures teach that the poor will always have with us (Deuteronomy 15:11). We can't solve the problem of poverty. But, we can be openhanded to the poor, come alongside the poor, serve the poor, and work to defeat poverty and systems that perpetuate poverty.
 - iii. Only Jesus can really end all of this injustice and racism. And, he is at work now through his body to demonstrate the kingdom of God. Today, we need to embody the kingdom of God, racial unity, reconciliation, and justice. We get to be examples of Jesus and his kingdom no.
 - iv. Jesus' final solution is to heal the world and bring the kingdom of God.
 - c. Let's ask God to raise up men and women who will serve as salt and light in every sector of society, demonstrating what it is like when God rules and reigns in love, righteousness, justice, and mercy.

- d. Let's pray for godly men and women to arise in their spheres of influence with mantels of wisdom, grace, and understanding like Joseph, Esther, and Daniel.
- e. And, let's pray for our leaders at the local, state, and national levels (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

10. Live your life in such a way that the Lord uses you to bring out the God-flavors and God-colors around you (Matthew 5:13-16).

- a. *"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage. 14 "Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. 15 If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. 16 Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16 MSG).*
- b. What are we highlighting in our comments, posts, and conversations?
 - i. Darkness? Cynicism? Vengeance? Hopelessness? Anger? Giving up? Withdrawing? Helplessness?
 - ii. Light? Faith? Forgiveness? Hope? Love? Faithful endurance? Engagement? Acts of kindness and doing good?
- c. I want to express thanks to those of you are being salt and light in your spheres of influence. Thank you to those who are loving your neighbors well. Thank you to those who are laying down your life to serve others and to care or others. Thank you to those who are learning and growing in your capacity to show up well and to show up differently in our culture.

11. Build bridges and be a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9; Ezekiel 22:30; Isaiah 58:12; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21).

- a. Many of us have been taught to keep the peace, rather than dealing with issues and working to make peace.
 - i. Peace keeping just asks people to get along without dealing with underlying issues of hurt, pain, injustice, repentance, reconciliation, and restoration.
 - ii. Peace making requires hopeful, hard work to build bridges and to restore breaches.
 - iii. Peace makers acknowledge areas of wrong, hurt, and pain, listen to the impact of brokenness, apologize sincerely, and re-promise.

- b. Cheryl Moses shared a couple of resources with me that I wanted to pass along. Here is a [link to Be the Bridge](#) that talks about how to build bridges with others in this hour and in our culture. Here is another [link](#) that presents a program for racial reconciliation.

12. Be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:9).

- a. *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9 NIV).*
- b. Never give up; never give in; never quit. If you don't quit, you win.
- c. With the Lord helping us, we will not just survive, but we will thrive and overcome.
- d. *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NIV).*
- e. *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:1-5 NIV).*

13. Point people to Jesus.

- a. Share the good news in Christ (the gospel of the kingdom of God).
- b. People are open to the gospel right now like never before.
- c. People need to see and hear the good news about the kingdom of God.

Ministry Time: