

Children's Moment *What is racism?*

Good morning, boys and girls, we're on our third lesson about racism. Racism happens in lots of different ways.

Lori Hutcherson shares a bit of her life story with us, "When I was 3, my family moved into an upper-middle-class, all-white neighborhood. We had a big backyard, so my parents built a pool. Not the only pool on the block, but the only one neighborhood boys started throwing rocks into. White boys.

One day my mom ID'd one as the boy from across the street. She went to his house, told his mother, and, fortunately, his mother believed mine. My mom not only got an apology, but also had that boy jump in our pool and retrieve every single rock. No more rocks after that.

Then mom even invited him to come over to swim sometime if he asked permission. Everyone became friends. This one has a happy ending because my mom was and is badass about matters like these.

I hope you can see that the white privilege in this situation is being able to move into a 'nice' neighborhood and be accepted not harassed, made to feel unwelcome, or prone to acts of vandalism and hostility."¹

Boys and girls, I hope you don't have people treat you the way they treated Lori and her family. If you do, please know we don't support or agree with people who do bad things like that. We are sorry.

We can do better. I hope you will teach us how.

Let's pray ...

¹ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/my-white-friend-asked-me-to-explain-white-privilege-so-i-decide/>

Message: "Living in a New House"

We are the problem.

Drew Brees, quarterback for the New Orleans Saints football team, was recently engaged in the controversy over players' actions during the national anthem, which is played before a game. He apologized for suggesting the players who knelt in protest were disrespectful to the country. Now, you may not agree with that position. If so, here's something to consider ...

Brittany Brees, Drew's wife, posted a statement on Instagram.

She quoted Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Not only will we have to repent for the sins of bad people, but we also will have to repent for the appalling silence of good people."²

I'm going to read her statement as I believe it's good for us to hear.

"WE ARE THE PROBLEM.

'I write this with tears in my eyes and I hope you all hear our hearts.' She continues, 'I have read [Rev. King's] quote and scripture 1000 times. Every time I read it, the words sink into my heart. I think 'Yes this is what it's all about.' Only until the last few days, until we experienced the death threats, we experienced the hate, did I realize that these words were speaking directly to us.

How could anyone who knows us or has had interactions with us think that Drew or I have a racist bone in our body?

But that's the whole point! Somehow we as white America, we can feel good about not being racist, feel good about loving one another as God loves us. We can feel good about educating our children about the horrors of slavery and history. We can read books to our children about Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Hank Aaron, Barack Obama, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman and feel like we're doing our part to raise our children to love, be unbiased and with no prejudice. To teach them about all the African Americans who have fought for and risked their lives against racial injustice.

² TBD

Somehow as white Americans we feel like that checks the box of doing the right thing. Not until this week did Drew and I realize THAT THIS IS THE PROBLEM. To say 'I don't agree with disrespecting the flag' I now understand was also saying 'I don't understand what the problem really is. I don't understand what you're fighting for. And I'm not willing to hear you because of our preconceived notions of what that flag means to us.'

That's the problem. We are not listening. White America is not hearing. We're not actively LOOKING for racial prejudice. We have heard stories from men and women we have known and loved for years about the racism that occurred in their lives, stories that were never shared or talked about because somehow they were considered normal.

To all of our friends and anyone we hurt, we will do better. We want to do better, we want to HEAR you, and we will fight for you because thinking we are not part of the problem is checking the box. It means we are not doing enough. It's our job to educate ourselves.

We are sorry.³

I applaud Brittany and Drew for their statement. They publicly admitted they are part of the problem. They need to change. And change starts by listening. To all my white friends, family members, colleagues and neighbors, I hope you take the Brees' words to heart: **WE are the problem!**

I've spoken to several of you since we began this sermon series. I've heard through email, text and posts you support this important conversation. We want to change.

The question is "what do we do?"

The answer isn't easy. We all have different ideas. How we listen, see and act depends on our ethic, our behavioral DNA. It's our code of conduct. It's what it means to live with integrity. As Christians who are Methodists, we believe in social justice. We are called to act. We believe God's holiness is present when we gather as community. We believe God is present when communities are healed and restored.

³ *Ibid*

Jesus gave us a roadmap to how we are to live in the sermon on the mount. Understanding, interpreting and living out Jesus' teaching is the task of each generation. When we come together as a community focused on following Jesus, we're called to show love for one another in such a way that others, who don't have faith, will see it and remark on it.

We have a long way to go. We read the words of scripture but we hear and interpret them in different ways. That's not only true between denominations, but in any group that assembles. And our different views lead us to act in different ways. If we don't realize and recognize the different perspectives, we will find ourselves in conflict.

Today, I want to spend a few minutes talking about the different kinds of ethics people have. Here are five of the most common ethical perspectives.

- Right vs. wrong (rules)
- Good vs. bad
- Principle - values and attributes (personal)
- Fit with group
- Covenant or relationship ethics, based on spirituality and community.

We all look at the world and act based on one of these ethics.

The first three are by far the most common. We all know people who see things as right or wrong. We all know people who see good or evil in the world. We all know people who look for principles to live by, so they can become the best they can be. We all know people who are trying to fit in with a group and that makes sense. It's an important factor. White people tend to see themselves as individuals first, while seeing non-whites as members of a group first.

Covenant ethics is a way of seeing the world and living based on deep spirituality and a sense of community. We see relationship as the priority. This is what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. practiced, according to Dr. Hak Joon Lee.⁴ Relationship is what's most important. That means starting with our relationship with God and then being in

⁴ Hak Joon Lee, *We Will Get To The Promised Land*, TBD,

relationship with other people, especially those who don't look like, think like or act the way we do. That kind of relationship takes belief. It takes trust. It takes love. That's why our relationship with God is often referred to in terms of marriage. It's the most obvious kind of covenant relationship. The cement binding us in this kind of relationship is faith and love. That gives us hope.

There's one thing to realize about having different kinds of ethics.

They often don't agree. Here's an illustration: our view of the role of police. Some see this from the view that rules must be kept. The police enforce those rules, so no change is needed. Some see the conflict between the police and communities as a reflection of good versus bad actors. Those who are interested in principles are looking for underlying truth or philosophy to explain and help us to find a way. Some argue the police aren't identifying with the group they are serving, the whole community, so they need to change.

I'm introducing to you is a covenant or relationship view.

The community and those charged with law enforcement need to commit to a healthy relationship, guided by God's Spirit. When that happens, people listen before they act. We look for the presence of God. We are slow to anger. We have the best interests of all those in the relationship at heart.

I believe Christian ethics apply to every aspect of how we live.

When we realize we're living and interacting with people who have different gifts and experiences, it changes the way we see them. We can begin to hear how our prejudice has shaped and formed their view of the world. It shapes their relationships. It shapes their home life. It shapes their opportunities for education, work, healthcare, economics and faith. It shapes communities, states and nations. It shapes the very way we look at creation and other people.

Lasting change isn't going to be easy. It's going to take time. It's like building a house in a new neighborhood. At the beginning of the process, we are thrilled and excited. We look forward to the new house with anticipation. It's scary. We aren't sure how we'll get along with

our new neighbors. There's a lot of uncertainty about the building process, the workers, the design, whether it will pass inspection.

Rest assured. God has a plan. You are God's house. The Holy Spirit is at work within each of you, within all who are connected by this community of faith, and people from around the world. God will see the work through.

What's next? Our scriptures from today help us to embrace our new identity as Jesus' followers living in a world filled with different opinions. Paul said, "*I kept my bearings in Christ - but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view*"

We cannot know another person's POV or life unless we walk with them and share a bit of their experience. It begins with a relationship. Reach out to someone today. Ask them how they are. Listen without offering judgment or trying to "solve their problems." Ask what you can do. Most of all, be patient. stay at it. You're most likely the one who needs the help. Don't seek someone out as a project. Make a friend. Go into it with the intent to build long lasting relationship. Be willing to be held accountable. Be someone whom others can trust.

When you do that, you'll take the first step on the journey of faith. I invite to start today. We can do better!

Opportunities to Serve

▪ **INVITE-CONNECT-ENGAGE**

- Call someone and listen to them (non-anxious way)
- Pray for them and let them know you did
- Ask how you can help

Take our reopening Survey – open through Monday, June 22nd

Recommend two books

"White Fragility" Robin D'Angelo

"We Will Get to the Promised Land" Hak Joon Lee

I invite you to purchase them and participate in online discussion

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (MSG)

Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized - whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ - but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!

Romans 6:6-14 (MSG) - Freedom

Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life - no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time - remember, you've been raised from the dead! - into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.