

The Church-pioneers of racial reconciliation

Introduction: Giving the Word the authority to change us...

James 1:19-21-*Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.-what is our disposition?*

-The desire to justify oneself in the face of the Word-**Is to remove the authority and use it to justify our behavior**

(so instead of changing to be more like Christ, we get more knowledge and become arrogant)

1 Corinthians 8:1-...*This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up.-a knowledge that doesn't build people to see ourselves unified by the love of Christ is arrogant- creating an "I am better than you mentality"*

Ex: slave masters of Africans in this country used scripture to build one race over another=**used scripture not to unify in love, embracing it's authority, but to separate and create a hierarchy of value, used it to justify their behavior=pride**

-Pride either elevates itself to be something it is not-**or devalues itself not to be something God declares you are=**

-The authority (in our lives) can never be how we feel about a person or a thing, but what the Word says-**having the Word and Spirit direct how we should feel and view our lives and other people=a true Christian perspective**

Ex: God created man in His own image...-**you can't distinguish that to a certain race, or your perspective is not Christian**

-The ability to be corrected by God and His Word-**means you understand the Word's authority and benefit for loving God and people**

-seeing the authority of the Word to receive it with meekness-**is allowing it to fight the sin in our lives that is destroying our soul**

***Christ authority must override our interpretations of authority=this comes from a relationship w/ Jesus**

-The reason we don't submit to many things is **1) we've been abused and hurt by authority, so we are hesitant to trust it**

2) we don't see the benefit of being submitted, over being in control-which is dangerous, have you experienced Jesus

-If you and I are not submitted to the Lord's authority and live to control people because of fear-**we are like the world and may not know Christ**

-**1 Corinthians 4:20-21**-*For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.-Paul says that our the Kingdom is in power*

-if we are not effective in some way by God's power -**it is because we are not submitted to the King and operating in His Kingdom**

John 15:5-*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.-you cannot do anything effective for God without being submitted to His authority*

So as I deal with racial reconciliation, particularly in a church with a vision like ours-the call is for the church to see themselves as peacemakers, and not seek to justify why race relations and seeking to love others outside of our race is "out of bounds"-remember a Christian perspective knows that without obedience to Jesus we are cursed under the law, so we should be humble. But if we find our confidence and security elsewhere it is because our identity is not in Christ, but something else...

-The Church should desire to have courage to be a forerunner in this issue of race because Jesus was.

I. Justifying what we are comfortable with

Luke 10:25-29-*And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" 27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

***The danger of our interpretation over God's...for your life**

-There can be a major difference between **how we operate functionally, and what we profess to believe**

-The lawyer who interprets the law for a living, professed to believe in what to do, to inherit eternal life-**but he was looking to distort it according to what he was comfortable with** (dismissing the authority God intended)

-In his desire to control the interpretation of the law rather than submit to it-**The "lawyer" wanted to justify not loving everyone, or seeing everyone as his neighbor.**

-Because if he submitted under what God intended the scripture "loving your neighbor as yourself" to be-**That would mean as a Jew he would have to love people that he hated (Samaritan's) and function that way!**

-This would immediately bring him into disrepute with his clique or a certain hierarchy of people (Jew & Lawyer), so what he was comfortable with-**though people profess to believe a thing, love is not in word, but in deed, function!**

Ex: this is why you have to be honest about not naturally loving people vastly different than you-**but we are naturally comfortable not to!**

-This lawyer grew up never associating with Samaritans, so it was part of his lifestyle to see them as "less than"-**so when Jesus says love your neighbor as yourself, immediately he must remove God's authority & distort it to his comfort**

-So God challenges our sinful desires-**by calling us to submit to the authority of His interpretation not our own**

-So we can't hide behind profession or word-**1 John 3:18-Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.**

-So instead of seeing every man and woman created in God's image (God's interpretation)-**our pride desires to distinguish between who is valuable or who is not, who should we love and who we should not. =enter racism, sexism, agism, etc**

-The foundation of our natural belief (how we operate) is to discriminate-(man looks on the outward)-**not submit to God's authority and love our neighbor as ourselves=where is our faith?.**

II. When we don't see people as ourselves

Luke 10:30-32-Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, **and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.** 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

***What causes us to think we relate to people?**

-we realize that "being down" or oppressed is a place we never want to be-**our knee jerk reaction can be to just think about ourselves and never want to be like them, instead of looking deeper as to why someone is where they are**

-so naturally we don't think we can relate-but it is that step that keeps us from having compassion and doing something

-we focus on our differences to keep us from having the compassion of God to understand-**we judge, and justify why we can't relate because of our pride**

***The priest and Levites mentality towards a man in a ditch**

-they refused to consider being robbed could happen to them-**so if they were in a ditch from being robbed how would you want others to treat you?**

-this question didn't emerge, because they never pictured themselves being in that situation-**but what certainty/security do they have?**

Ex: For racial reconciliation and compassion to unite-**what makes anyone think they are safe against racism or any oppression?**

-so when you see blatant racism against other cultures-**what is your response? Compassion, or do you justify why you can't relate, and "pass on the other side of the road".**

-Are you asking who is your neighbor?-**making justifications why you don't get involved with racial reconciliation**

-instead of looking at them as yourself?-(like the Jews in Jesus day, they were busy distinguishing themselves as different and not cursed without Jesus)

***We don't relate because our identity is not in Christ, but an identity of our own authority**

-The priest and Levite found security in their status, not God and His heart-**this kept them from sharing the same possibilities of the man in the ditch-so they didn't relate to the man...(2 men ordained to have the heart of God didn't relate to His heart)**

-Is your identity and security in Christ, seeing yourself as the man in the ditch-**where your status doesn't eliminate you from relating to others to who are down?**

Ex: because you are "this", you can't relate to "that"

-they spent energy trying to get away from relating to the man in the ditch!**they literally went out of their way not to relate**

Ex: do you spend energy trying not relate to people who need compassion?-**by the things you have and the things you don't have to deal with, distancing yourself from people different than you?**

-but if you serve God, like these two men Jesus illustrates-**shouldn't we know what compassion really means?**

God does not show us compassion because we are good or you have a status that is acceptable=gospel

-It becomes clear that the Word to love your neighbor as yourself didn't have authority over the priest and Levite, their own justifications did...-**the church for centuries has been anemic in race relations because we too justify why we can't relate...because most are focused on keeping their own identity more than Christ identity...**

III. When Christ challenges our justifications

33 **But a Samaritan**, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then **he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.** 35 And the next day he took out two denari and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, **proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"** 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

***Jesus uses an example of volatile race relations to prove love conquers all...**

-The Samaritan proves that he is not bitter, and allowing "the authority of bitterness" from discrimination-**to keep him from walking in the love of Christ**

-He doesn't see himself as a victim of other people's hatred towards him, he walks in unconditional love-**because he is more concerned about his identity being in Christ, then the history of his people, being mistreated**

-his love towards a Jew reconciled race relations by relating to the man in the ditch-**seeing that as a Samaritan he could get robbed too, he had no status of security to rest in outside of God.**

Conclusion: Racial reconciliation is this...

-If you feel like you have a status to rest in outside of Christ that keeps you from relating to oppressed people in anyway, you need to fight it-**because your identity is in not in Christ, you functionally don't operate from His heart...**

-But if you feel like you have no status and have been oppressed because of what you have been through-**bitterness cannot be your identity to keep you from compassion and love to someone who needs it, though they don't deserve it**
1 John 2:4-6-Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.