



2020 IN 20/20

2020 (the year) IN 20/20 (seeing it clearly)

Part 5: The Issues – Racism

**Sermon Study Guide
September 20, 2020**

Introduction:

Last week, we talked about Political Correctness and the many positive aspects of PC, mainly about being **sensitive** to others and not **offending** people with our words. The diverse nature of America makes this all too easy to do. I also talked about the negative aspects of PC – where people feel shamed and bullied and end up censoring their words and even thoughts. This is especially concerning when it comes to religious or spiritual expressions. I concluded that, as Christians, we cannot give in to censoring or bullying, but must have a willingness to speak God's truth in love. We must also be willing to accept the consequences that may come, that is, be willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

Today's topic in our series "2020 in 20/20" is racism.

Rather than solve the world's problems of racism, how about we narrow the sphere and solve the possible problem of racism in ourselves and in our church.

Defining Moments in my life that changed the way I view race:

1. Growing up in NYC in the 60's and 70's – when black and white people in New York City (NYC) were separate and mostly disliked or even hated each other. That was my experience – going into a white neighborhood for a black person was very dangerous, while going into a black neighborhood for a white person was very dangerous.
2. Playing football with black teammates at Tilden HS – we became brothers. Besides going to war together on the football field on Saturdays, my black teammates were even willing to fight for/with me. My friends and their friends were still hateful towards each other, but my black football teammates and I became brothers.
3. When I became a Christian, the Word of God and spiritual common sense confirmed what I had realized in HS – that there is no basis for racial discrimination and it is a sin.
4. Reading the book *"Black Like Me" by John Howard Griffin* just before my first trip to Africa – Zimbabwe and South Africa. I experienced blatant racism from white pastors in Johannesburg and then visited Soweto. I felt ashamed to be white, but I also realized how far we had come in America.
5. Traveling to Ghana and touring Cape Coast, the place where all the slaves from Africa were kept before being sent to the Americas, I got that feeling of being ashamed to be white once again.

The words of the female African Ghanaian. our tour guide:

“Slavery was a human problem, not a race problem, as the African Tribal leaders were the ones who sold the slaves to the White European slave traders for “perfume and mirrors.”

6. Adopting Emmanuel as my son in the faith, and then hearing about racism from the perspective of a young African Pastor who loves and trusts me like a father.

Racism can be directed at people from all ethnicities and all nationalities, though in America it seems to have come hardest at and against African Americans.

Rather than trying to overturn racism in America, I want to focus on making sure that we have understanding of overturning racism in our hearts and in our church. By the grace of God, He has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to us.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 What is the ministry of reconciliation and why it important for each of us to embrace it? How can we apply this passage to the issue of racism?

- If we are going to overcome racism in our hearts and in our church, we have to be **careful to try to not offend others** as well as decide that we will **not be easily offended by each other**.

As we try to help each other to understand and bring healing to the pain racism is causing, we must give the benefit of the doubt to each other that we are not purposely trying to be offensive.

We must desire to understand as well as be understood – and we need to allow dialogue between the races to be honest and forthright, while agreeing that we might not agree, but that we won't be easily offended.

Examples:

- White Privilege – listen to an African American's or Hispanic's perspective on this and try to be compassionate about what they experience in everyday life, even today.
- Move On – listen to a white person's perspective on the fact that most of us did not commit the hateful acts of racism and that things are getting better.
- Systemic Racism – listen to what some African American's have experienced over the years and how that affects their view of the history, growth, and development of America.

- Immigration – listen to how this issue effects Hispanic families. Hispanic people, consider the importance of Immigration Laws and protecting our borders.
- Reverse Racism – listen to how some white people feel about this.

These issues are very hard to understand, and it is possible that we will see these things differently. As Christians, we don't need to be right, but rather we need to understand each other's thoughts, feelings, and experiences and carry each other's burdens, while maintaining a commitment to unity as Christians and as a church.

I believe that when a person receives Christ, that relationship becomes the most important aspect that defines us (our Identity is in Christ)

- Not our financial status
- Not our gender or our sexuality (more on this next week)
- Not our race or ethnicity

So as fellow Christians whose **Identity** is in Christ, these other things, though important in defining God's wonderful and diverse creation of human beings, must be secondary. We should not allow financial status, sexuality, race, or ethnicity to define us or to separate us as members of the body of Christ.

- Neither our political views or preferences.
- Neither our place of authority or leadership in the world and in the church
- As Christians, we are clearly commanded to "love one another."

With love as our guide for addressing racism in America with 20/20 Vision, let's look to the scriptures:

The Supremacy of Love: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- What is **not** Love from these verses and why?
- From these verses, describe love.

- How does this apply to the problem of racism? How should we live with each other from the heart out?

The Description of Love: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Our society confuses love and lust. Unlike lust, God's kind of love is directed outward to others, not inward towards us. It is impossible to have this love unless God helps us. List the types of actions from the heart that express love. What do they mean?

We might as well get used to loving all races and all people, because we'll be doing this for all eternity in heaven – because all races of people will be there worshipping God as one.

13:8b-12 While almost everything in this life is temporary, what will endure for eternity and why?

13:13 List the 3 virtues that characterize each real believer in their spiritual journey. How do we use each one to fight racism?

1 John 4:8 Love is the greatest of all human qualities and is an attribute of God himself. Love involves unselfish service to others and trying to understand other's perspectives without racing to conclusions about their hearts and motives. How does your love for others show Christ to them? What does your love for others reveal about your love for God?

Unfortunately, because of sin, racism will only be completely gone when we get to heaven. Until then, we fight racism with the power of the Holy Spirit and reach out to all people!

The greatest of all expressions we have as Christians is to love, or to love one another, so let's excel at this- starting now. If we do, when it comes to the issue of racism in America, we most certainly will see this issue with 20/20 spiritual vision.