



Statement on Race

The Bible clearly states the equal worth and dignity of all people made in God's image and likeness. God's ultimate plan is a Gospel reaching to every nation and bringing men and women equally around the throne of his son—from every tongue and tribe and nation.

Violence, prejudice, and bias against persons based on any generalization or categorization of class, race, ethnicity, language, or culture is clearly antithetical to the teachings and example of Jesus. Love of neighbor (as exemplified with the Good Samaritan) is Jesus's command to his followers.

We believe racism—the unique enterprise of denigrating persons based on the color of their skin for cultural domination and economic exploitation which has persisted since the age of exploration and colonization—is one of the greatest evils in human history. We also believe the patterns, systems and structures set up to promote this exploitation and dehumanization and the worldview thinking underneath it was one of the most egregious forms of the church historically losing its prophetic voice and allowing itself to be wedded to the kingdoms of this world rather than the narrow way of Jesus and the Kingdom of God he inaugurated.

We believe that much of the momentum of historic racism and slavery has significant traces that still remain today in our institutions, systems, and even subconscious ways of seeing and categorizing the world (what is called "implicit bias," which forms in early childhood and can be reinforced through racial stereotyping and other experiences throughout life). We believe that it is the church's call to speak against racism and injustice whenever we see it abstract thought forms or blatantly affecting someone made in the image of God. If we do not, we are guilty of the same form of silence and complicity for which Israel was punished with exile (see the book of Isaiah). We also believe that it has always been the example of God's people to acknowledge the sins of our forefathers—for we are a covenant people and not completely distinct or isolated individuals—modeled by the prophet Daniel. We do this as part of our ongoing lament and prayer of forgiveness before God. It is a form of recognizing the sin in the world—especially the sin among the faithful past and present and in our own hearts—that makes grace so powerful. Humility with the darker parts of church history is also a necessary part of our witness to non-believers and calling them to the redemptive parts of Jesus's church. Acknowledging past sins does not commit us to a political party or specific policies, but it does put us in a posture of humility seeking a society that can grow more just and represent greater equality over time.

In this unique moment in history, we acknowledge the truth and gladly chant that Black Lives Matter—because they matter to God, to us, and have not historically been treated as such. We stand in solidarity seeking not to be silent nor complicit in allowing overt or subtle forms of racism to continue to persist over time, but to be one with all who are made in the image of God, giving voice that all be treated equally as such. A collective lament over injustice is one of the most powerful forms of prayer and solidarity the Bible knows. Saying boldly that Black Lives Matter, does not commit us to a political platform nor specific policies as a church. We should never let our fear of what divides us or where we might have disagreement keep us from unity in matters of truth and justice around aims for equality in the image of God. Let us use our voices to say what we can in agreement and save our disagreements for better moments.

As a church, our leadership is using this moment in history for self-evaluation in creating an antiracism strategy. This strategy will help us audit our own systems and structures and to proactively determine how best to disciple our congregation forward in knowledge of bible, history, and culture and how best to live out the love of Jesus in our multiethnic church, our city, and our nation.

We believe our maturity as a church will be revealed in how we navigate challenging conversations and we also believe we will grow in maturity as we do the same.

Resources

1. The Myth of Equality, Ken Wytsma
2. The Color of Compromise, Jemar Tisby
3. I'm Still Here, Austin Channing Brown
4. "Why Race Belongs in our Justice Conversations" http://outreachmagazine.com/features/25839-race-gospel-justice-part-discussion-part-1.html?_ga=2.49078950.1024729009.1593454748-1895313528.1486855212