

Theme: All humans are descended from Adam and are the image of God, but there are many different ethnic groups, and God is calling us to overcome the sinful tendency to separate and to come together so that the Gospel might flourish in our area.

I. Intro - The Ongoing Struggle With Racism

- A. Several recent events - Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor
- B. The video of the murder of George Floyd
- C. Protests sparked across the US and the world
- D. What does the Scripture say about racism?
- E. Is this really a “Gospel issue” or is it a “political issue”?

II. The One Human Race

- A. We are all descended from one man - Adam
From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. Acts 17:26
 - 1. Paul says that all humans came from ONE man
 - 2. He is referring to the creation of Adam - the father of every human being
 - 3. No matter who we are, no matter our sex, no matter our skin color, no matter the language we speak, we are all part of the human race descended from Adam. This is our core identity.
 - 4. The most important thing that can be said of any human being is that they are human - this is our core identity.
- B. We are all the image of God

‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ Acts 17:28

- 1. Paul quotes two Greek poets (pagan poems to their false gods!)
 - 2. Our being is found in God - even if we false concepts of Who He is or even if we deny Him!
 - 3. We are the offspring of God - we bear His image
 - 4. Adam was created in God’s image and passed it on to every single human descended from Him
This is the written account of Adam’s line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God...³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. Genesis 5:1, 3
 - a. Adam was made in the image of God
 - b. Adam’s son is in the image and likeness of Adam
 - c. Every human descended from Adam is the image and likeness of God.
 - 5. No matter who we are, no matter our sex, no matter our skin color, no matter the language we speak, we all bear the image of God. This is our core dignity.
 - 6. The value of every human being is found in the image of God that they bear.
- C. There are many ethnicities/nations in humanity
From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. Acts 17:26
 - 1. Every nation - every ‘ethnos’, every ethnicity

2. We are all the descendants of Adam and Eve, and we are all the image of God, but there are many ethnicities, many nations, each different from the next.
3. Our ethnicity is a critical part of who we are, how we experience life, and how we respond to God and the Gospel.
4. This too is part of the image of God. Our God is so great that no one ethnicity can possibly encompass Who He is or represent Him.
5. This diversity is also part of the image of God. Our God, the Holy Trinity, is not only unity but also diversity.
6. The diversity we experience via the different ethnicities and cultures is not a bad thing but rather part of the very expression of Who God is and part of His good plan for humanity, and it will continue into eternity.
 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. Revelation 7:9
 - a. Nation = 'ethnos' - ethnicity!
 - b. Into eternity we are marked by our ethnicity, and it informs our worship of God!
7. Our Triune God is so awesome, so beyond compare, that a multitude of ethnicities and cultural expressions are required to display His glory and proclaim His praise!

III. Our Struggle With 'Racism'

- A. We must recognize our struggle to embrace God's plan
 1. God has created many ethnicities, but we struggle to embrace one another
 2. I wish it was a different term, but 'racism' is a problem across the world
 3. As long as the people are far away, it is not a problem - it can even be exotic! But when we have to live with one another and embrace our differences, it leads to friction and conflict.
 4. This is not always by skin color - Hutu's and Tutsi's
 5. The first major problem that arose in the early church was the breaking down by cultural tribes - Greek-speaking Jews thought their widows were being overlooked by Hebrew speaking Jews (Acts 6).
 6. We tend to break down into 'tribes' and to not embrace God's call to embrace one another, but instead to find ways for our 'tribe' to be in a position of superiority.
 7. This is the effect of sin and it touches every single human being. In America, this tendency has been 'racialized' based on skin color, but at its root is the same sinful pattern.
- B. God is the one who has brought the various ethnicities together in our nation
 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and **he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.** Acts 17:26

1. In His Sovereignty, God has determined where various ethnicities are found during each age.
2. This means it is God Who has brought us to this moment where the United States is brimming with different ethnicities.
3. Life is certainly simpler when we are in contact with only one ethnicity, and everyone around us looks and thinks like us, likes the same music and food, and has the same culture and experience. BUT GOD HAS DETERMINED HE WANTS US TO LIVE IN CONTACT WITH OTHERS OF DIFFERENT ETHNICITIES IN OUR TIME AND PLACE.
4. To long for a 'simpler time' when we rarely had contact with other 'tribes' is to long for something other than what God in His Sovereignty has determined is our call and is for our good.
5. This means God is calling us to the real work of learning to embrace one another with all of our cultural differences, making room for one another, learning to hear one another, and to empathize with experiences that are very different than our own.
6. It also means that we are being called to resist the sinful impulse to isolate from one another or to attempt to prioritize the culture and experiences of my 'tribe' over that of others.
7. All of this is especially the call of those in the majority 'tribe', as the biblical call and principle is those in power must serve the needs of others.

IV. The Goal: The Flourishing of the Gospel

A. God has done all of this so people would find Him

God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. Acts 17:27

1. God's purpose in all of this is to bring people back to Himself
2. If I think this was a poor plan, I must think I am wiser than God!
3. Some think that all of this is a distraction from the Gospel, but God says it is the path to the flourishing of the Gospel!

B. A call for the American Church in our day

1. We need to hear God's call for our time and place
2. Earlier generations heard the call to sacrifice and pay the price to take the Gospel to other 'tribes' in foreign lands - and this led to an incredible harvest of people coming to Christ that continues into our own day.
3. Our generation in the American Church must address this issue in our own country to see the Gospel flourish here.
4. The Church in America has remained divided for far too long. The church growth movement even promoted this idea - have local churches comprised of only one 'tribe'. THIS IS UNBIBLICAL!
5. We need to see this as a great opportunity for the Church to show forth God's call as people from various tribes and nations gather together to worship, love, and serve one another!
6. I believe this would be a catalyst for the Gospel in our time and our place!

V. Applying the Word

A. How will BRCC be part of this?

1. We are not a church where everyone is the same - different races/ethnos, economic levels, education levels, political affiliations
2. This is good and healthy! Thank you!
3. We will proactively continue to pray and look for God to make us a church that looks like our county and is a foretaste of heaven!
4. We have not given in to the false dichotomy of 'gospel' vs. 'social gospel' - and we will not!
5. We will continue to look for ways to partner with other churches in prayer and service!
6. Pray for us to be part of God's mission here as well as across the globe!

B. How can I personally be part of this?

1. EVERY one of us is called to work to see the Gospel flourish
2. If I was going out as a missionary to reach out to another 'nation'/'ethnos' what would I do to be effective?
 - a. LEARN - Read books - much has been written; and read things that stretch you and make you uncomfortable at times
 - b. LISTEN - be quick to listen, slow to speak. This is especially critical right now, and when some may be expressing pain - give them space to do so.
 - c. PRAY - we need God to move! There are spiritual strongholds that can only be brought down by prayer.

d. REACH OUT - build relationships; hang out; serve together.

C. Closing prayer

Racism, the Image of God, and the Gospel

Acts 17:26-28

June 14, 2020

Prayer

Psalm 67

Teaching keywords: Racism, image of God, humanity, Trinity, evangelism and missions

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, Selah ² that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. ³ May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. Selah ⁵ May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁶ Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. ⁷ God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him. Psalm 67

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' Acts 17:26-28