



JUNE 14, 2020

LOVE FIRST, FIRST LOVE

WEEK DEVOTIONAL BASED ON SUNDAY'S WORSHIP SERVICE

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP SUNDAYS 9:00AM AT
WWW.FIRSTLUTHERAN-BARRON.ORG OR ON THE RADIO 97.7FM

Acts 2:1-21

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

10:1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. 2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. 5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' 8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. 9 Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, 10 no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food.

HOLDING IN PRAYER

For health and healing we pray for: Valri Scheps, DeAnn Anderson, Eugene Olson, Ron Kahl, Kathy Weghorn, Betty Missling and Gail Larson

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of compassion, you have opened the way for us and brought us to yourself. Pour your love into our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of your realm and faithfully proclaim the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

REFLECTION

BY PASTOR RON MATHEWS

In the midst of hate, how do we seek love?

Racism is, at its core, an unfettering hatred for a person based solely on a person's race, and made manifest by differing the color of skin. It starts and ends with the judgement that a particular race is superior to another. That a person of different colored skin is inferior.

Racism has more to do than just hatred though. That is just what is made manifest throughout **history**. The next is the **institution** that sets up systems in which that hatred is perpetuated. For example, if you were a person of color and went to buy a house in the early 1900s, the bank would deny the mortgage for the sale unless the house was purchased in a particular neighborhood...and of course that particular neighborhood was not very desirable. High paying employment opportunities were denied to people of color, regardless of their qualifications. This resulted in people working low paying jobs, living in a low-quality neighborhood that led to poor school systems. This is an oversimplification of how poverty is a hard cycle to break out of, but it demonstrates my point.

History and institutions create racial disadvantages, and they work together by creating an **imbalance of power** based on race.

The problem is this imbalance of power perpetuates systemic attitudes that subconsciously shape the way we think and engage others.

As the church, we have a well-established dichotomy of our head and our heart. Our theology identifies that God created humankind in God's image. (Genesis 1:27) We understand that God so loved the world that he sent God's son to die for everyone. (John 3:16) That Jesus' mission was to the entire world, and sent his disciples to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Our theology says everyone, all of creation. And...yet, our Jesus is always depicted as white. this is a problem for two reasons.

First, Jesus wasn't white! He was a Middle Eastern Jew – this means he had brown skin, hair, and eyes. And yet, we have so many pictures of a blond hair, blue eyed Jesus with a neatly trimmed beard.

Secondly, this history of showing pictures of Jesus in paintings, stained glass windows, statues, on note cards and even in books has tainted our faith and thus our hearts with white supremacist, racism.

You see the institution of our faith has subconsciously, through **history**, placed a white guy as the savior of the world. And thus, as the **institution** places on a pedestal this white man, an **imbalance of power** is created as over time it becomes harder for us to honor the image of God in people who aren't white.

When we see Jesus as white,
When we see God as white,
We see people who are not white as inferior.

This is racism. Unintentional. Subconscious. Systemic racism. This is the fight we are fighting today. Raising our awareness in the ways systemic racism perpetuates the hate. We, as Christians need to shift our thinking away from the idea that the default human skin tone is white and start considering the fact that our God is for everyone.

All means all.
Regardless of race, ethnicity, or color.

Perhaps it starts by considering the fact that the body which hung on the cross was a Middle Eastern Jew, brown body: broken tortured, and publicly executed by the government.

Not too much different than what people of color faced all but a generation ago for getting married.

Our faith carries the scars of the lynch at Calvary.

Pastor and Theologian of Liberation Theology, James Cone, writes: "the cross is the symbol of lynching" - Our savior was lynched. He was whipped till he bled; He was beaten and mocked; He died as a slave on the cross.

Our faith carries the scars of Calvary. Our faith carries the scars of liberation and of the cross. We have a radical faith in Christ's death. And we are called to live out that radicalism, to the ends of creation.

We, God's disciples of all races and colors with such diversity that encompasses all of the world. We who believe in God and proclaim Christ to be our Lord and Savior are called to: "cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons."

Jesus not only sends the original 12 out with power to authenticate the kingdom's nearness but to announce it by using the very same words as their teacher: "The kingdom of heaven has come near."

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the Kingdom of God has come near this day. As baptized believers we are expected to resemble the one who sent us in word and deed. To be sent by Jesus is to be sent as Jesus.

We are God's presence in the world.
We are God's hands and feet.

As such, we are forever the advocate for the disinherited.

To be the voice for the voiceless; shelter to the homeless; food and water to the hungry and thirsty.

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. (Micha 6:8)

