

Race, Ethnicity & the Gospel Part I

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Preachers: Daniel Allen, Matt Denney

[0:00] Well, welcome. It's good to see all of you. Thanks for coming out. Hopefully as the sun makes its way up into the sky, it'll get a little warmer here. And just to give you a little roadmap of what we'll be doing this week and next week in this two-part series, Daniel and I will be jumping in at various points. And this week we'll be really focusing on the biblical foundations of how we can be thinking about race, ethnicity, and the gospel. And I'll spend some time working through the Old Testament and then Daniel's going to take us through some of the New Testament. And obviously we're going to make going from the beginning of scripture to the end of scripture in one session. And so it's going to, of course, be a 30,000 feet kind of overview. But we'll also have spaces for Q&A; and hopefully that will be fruitful as well. And we invite you to ask questions or give thoughts in that time as well. And because this particular session is focused on the biblical foundations, we're not necessarily going to be answering really directly, you know, how do we think about race in America right now? But hopefully next week we're going to be talking more about our own particular history as a country and as a city even and how we might think about some of the contemporary questions. But we think it's important to lay some of the foundations this week. But before I dive into thinking about race, ethnicity, and justice in the Old Testament,

I wanted to... Can everybody hear me okay back there? Okay, good. Just name a few observations that I think I've experienced in the church in particular. And some of these observations probably apply to predominantly white churches in particular. And obviously Trinity is a multi-ethnic church, but the plurality of folks are white. And so these are just a few observations I wanted to mention. And one is that I think we can sometimes tend to selectively under-emphasize certain continuities between the Old and New Testament. And we'll dive more into that later. But I think when I've been in other churches and as I read stories about justice and the Old Testament, there's a much greater comfort level to see the continuity between God's heart for justice in the Old Testament and today. And then a second observation is that I think we have not reckoned enough with how much our racial and cultural background shapes our biblical interpretation. I think as a white person myself, I think I so often think that the way I'm approaching scripture is just... That's just the way... Or the way I see it approached in the space that I'm in. That's just the way it is or the way that it ought to be done.

And then when I go into spaces that are predominantly black or Latino or Asian and they interpret it differently, I tend to think, oh, they're bringing a certain lens. But when I come to scripture, it's just sort of approaching it directly, but not realizing that I too am approaching it with particular lenses of how I've grown up and that affects how I see and interpret scripture. And relatedly, a third observation that many of us have not listened or sat under very much teaching of non-white pastors, theologians, and other brothers and sisters as they have read and interpreted scripture and seeing how that can bring to life certain aspects of scripture that can illuminate how we might understand God's redemptive story. And then last observation is that it is easy to disconnect conversations about race and conversations about justice. And so in our time together, I really want to not just talk about the story of God's heart for race and ethnicity through scripture, but to talk about those things in combination with thinking about justice and thinking about them together. And so as I move through sort of this first component, what I'll be doing is identifying two major themes, and then I'm going to identify them in four different places, four different eras of the Old Testament.

[5:21] And so those two themes, the overarching idea is this, that God has always had a grand redemptive plan for a multicultural community of God worshipers characterized by holistic multi-generational justice.

And so I'll sort of separate those two themes, which will become intertwined at various points.

But the first one is that God has always had a plan for a multi-ethnic community of people worshipping him. And then the second, that God has always had a plan for holistic multi-generational justice.

And I'll sort of identify those things in these four different eras of the Old Testament. And so we'll start in the book of Genesis. If we were to go through Genesis 1 and 2, we would get a vision of a world where humans have a perfect and harmonious relationship with God and with one another. And then with sin, this is broken and sin infects every facet of human relationships with God and with one another. And from families to communities to nations, we see hatred, bitterness, oppression. But God had a grand plan for redemption. And we see him, one aspect of this in Genesis 12 is the first place where we'll be looking with a picture of God's plan. It's a description of a multi-ethnic community of worshipers he will bring together. And so Genesis 12, starting in verse 1, it says, Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you,

I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And so from towards the beginning of God's plan, we see that God desires that all families of the earth be blessed and the people of God will be agents of that blessing. And as the story unfolds, we'll see more and more how he intends for that blessing to come by bringing people of different ethnic and cultural groups together united in worship of him. And so this is just the beginning, a hint of what is going to be. [7 : 54] And in this stage, we sort of the stage of Abraham, we also see our second theme that this community is characterized by holistic, multi-generational justice. So if we were to turn ahead a few chapters to Genesis 18, in verse 19, God speaking, for I have chosen him, Abraham, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him. And so two aspects of this verse that I wanted to highlight. First, we see the intergenerational character of God's people. It says God chooses Abraham and Abraham is commanding his children and his household after him. There's this passing down of God's desires for his people and how they live out their calling as the people of God.

And it requires intentionality to encourage faithfulness to God and loving neighbors to future generations. And here's the flip side that we'll see throughout the Old Testament is that unfaithfulness to God and oppression of people doesn't take intentionality. It's what inertia takes us to, and it accumulates with generation, and it becomes increasingly difficult and imperative for future generations to pursue faithfulness and undo oppression. And so this passage hints at that. We won't go into much more detail, but I just want to signal that intergenerational aspect, which will come up later. And second, we see in this verse this emphasis on doing righteousness and justice. These words are repeated over and over in the Old Testament. They're sometimes, they're often linked, sometimes used interchangeably, sometimes translated as one another. Here, in this context, righteousness probably connotes God's distinct holiness, perfection, ethical uprightness, what he calls his people to.

[10 : 08] And justice often is used as sort of a judgment in a retributive sense, but other times it refers to mercy or forgiveness. And here, it's probably used more generally, referring to a holistic justice, where wrongs are made right, where broken things are made whole, where the oppressed are set free, where violence and hunger give way to peace and flourishing.

And these two words, righteousness, are used 46 times in the same verse in the Old Testament, often linked.

And laden in these two words are so many different dimensions, which is partially why I use that word holistic. They refer to our relationship with God and with people.

They refer to physical flourishing and justice and spiritual flourishing.

There's a spiritual and physical. They refer to individual relationships with God and collective relationships with God and others as the people of God. There's so many different dimensions.

[11 : 19] And we could trace all those different dimensions through the Old Testament. We don't have a lot of time here, but I just want to just highlight that there's so many different layers to these concepts in Scripture.

But we'll keep moving and we'll see both of these concepts in different phases. And so we saw them in Genesis, in the era of Abraham. And so we'll highlight them also in sort of the era of Moses,

in sort of Exodus through Deuteronomy.

So as you know, the descendants of Abraham ended up in Egypt. And after Joseph died, the Egyptians made them slaves. But then God delivered them from Egypt into the wilderness. And they would go back to the promised land. And in the wilderness, we see God reveal himself and give the law. And we again see these dimensions, the multi-ethnic community and the holistic, multi-generational justice on display here as well.

And so just to highlight that quickly, if you turn to Exodus 23, here's one of sort of God's exhortations as he gives Moses the law.

[12 : 35] It says, You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner. For you are sojourners in the land of Egypt. And these words, sojourner, foreigner, often used in the law.

And the logic of this verse is so, I think, powerful. It says, care for foreigners, for sojourners, because you were sojourners.

And I brought you out and delivered you. So just as God delivered you when you were foreigners and sojourners, so also you ought to show that same love to others who you encounter who are similarly placed as you were.

Elsewhere in the books of the law, we see passages about how they have to bring others from other nations, sojourners, into the communal practices of worshiping God and following him and living out this covenant.

So even here, we see that God knows that the community of God will be a multi-ethnic community again. But we also see here, it says, you shall not oppress a sojourner.

[13 : 49] And implicit in that is the acknowledgement that sojourners, ethnic minorities, are often oppressed.

And here he's commanding them, don't do that. And in fact, show a particular God reflecting love towards those who are different, towards those that others will oppress. And so again, we see that sort of multi-ethnic dimension.

And then we also see in these books the holistic, multi-generational justice of God. And one place where I want to highlight that is in the book of Leviticus, in chapter 25.

And I will start reading in verse 8.

It says, It says,

[15 : 42] In this passage, we see God's provision for a year of jubilee.

Every 50th year, all inhabitants of the land were to be freed. All land was to be returned to the original clans, dating back to the time when the land was evenly distributed.

It was a grand reset. People who had been oppressed are unilaterally set free. People whose parents had lost their lands will have the land of their parents return.

People who had accumulated extra wealth in land are to give it away, to return it so that the land would again be held equally. People are to fear God and love their neighbors in a way that is pretty radically upsetting the status quo.

So, this is, I think, again, a reflection of that kind of holistic justice. But I want to ask, why would these provisions exist?

[17 : 03] Why not just tell people sort of the commands we see elsewhere in the law? To stop oppressing people, to stop doing the things that lead to more oppression.

Why not just tell them to love their neighbors and get rid of individual prejudice? All of those things God does say elsewhere in the law. But he also gives this provision for this particular year of Jubilee.

Why? I think it's because the land and the people of God would still not be just. Because oppression accumulates with generations.

And the effects of oppression and injustice are passed down to future generations. Even if they don't continue to practice the things themselves. And so, faithfulness meant not just stopping the oppression, but undoing the effects of past generations injustice.

And again, we'll dive more into maybe what that means for us next week. There's things that I'll hold off on talking about.

[18 : 06] But one last distinction I want to make here is that I think there's a difference between God punishing people for the sins of their descendants.

And God providing the command and encouragement and power to undo the effects of the sins of past generations. If that makes sense.

So, there are places in scripture where God talks about, which we'll see an example of wrath or retributive judgment towards people because of the sins of forefathers.

And this maybe is one of those places where we might see a discontinuity with the New Testament because of the cross. But where I think there is continuity is where we see God providing this command and encouragement to undo the effects of past generations.

And I think what I want to urge us from this passage is not that I think we should practice the year of Jubilee in all specificity.

[19 : 13] But I firmly believe that the heart of God for the people of God is revealed in the year of Jubilee. And I think that's just as alive today as it was then.

The heart of God revealed in this year of Jubilee of freedom and justice, the undoing of past generations oppression. I think that's still alive today.

And so, in the era of Moses, we see these things again. Multi-ethnic community, holistic, multi-generational justice. And we'll see that again as we go into the era of the kings.

And again, I'm just highlighting a few examples from each. I can't go into detail. As the people of God make it to the promised land, God promises to be their king and to lead them as they live out their calling to worship him, to love their neighbors, and be a blessing to all nations.

But they consistently fail. And eventually, they demand a human king, and God gives them human kings who often are characterized by unfaithfulness to God and oppression of the weak.

[20 : 23] They have moments of greatness where judges or kings lead the people to love God and love neighbors. But again, they often fail.

But even here, we often see these themes again that we've identified. Multi-ethnic community and holistic, multi-generational justice. In the book of Ruth, we see a Moabite woman at the center of this book.

And the book really highlights her ethnic background. And that's really an essential theme that's sort of underlying the book of Ruth.

And she marries a Jewish man. And one of the things I think is really significant is how the book of Ruth ends. The last verse says that it's talking about how Ruth and Boaz had a son named Obed. And the last verse says, Obed fathered Jesse and Jesse fathered David. Here is this book that's talking about this Moabite woman. And it ends by highlighting that she is the grandmother of David, the most important figure in the era of the kings.

[21 : 32] And what I think it's pointing to is that she is a part of the central plot line of the Old Testament, the God's redemptive story. And I think we would see that often in the Old Testament, where it intentionally highlights someone who's not Jewish, who is playing a really significant role in God's redemptive plan.

And Matthew picks this up in Matthew 1, naming Ruth in this sort of line from Abraham to David to Jesus. And again, there's other places we can name that.

But I think that's an important theme, place where we see this theme of the multi-ethnic plan of God. And then we also see in this era the holistic, multi-generational justice.

And one place where we see this named again is 1 Chronicles 18, 14, talking about David. It says, so David reigned over all Israel and he administered justice and equity to all his people.

The same two Hebrew words we saw, justice and righteousness from Genesis, again highlighted here as significant in the Davidic reign.

[22 : 48] And of course, we know that David didn't do this perfectly and often failed quite dramatically, as did so many of the kings who came after him.

And many of the kings who came after him even forgot God entirely. Sometimes this led to generations of people who had such entrenched unfaithfulness and injustice that they didn't even know what was right anymore, what God was calling them to.

One example of this is in 2 Kings 22. Josiah had become king after a string of kings who had done a horrible job, who were known for their idolatry and for their violence towards the weak.

And it got to the point where the book of the law was entirely forgotten. But Josiah wanted to do what was right.

And one day someone found the law and read it to Josiah. And here's what Josiah said when he heard God's word read.

[24 : 00] He said, He's an identification with how past generations has affected the world in which he lives.

He owns up to these effects. And again, he's even identifying a wrath against them for these sins. But what I think is significant for us, where I think there, again, is a continuity, is that the next few chapters, if we were to read them, document how he led a systematic effort to undo the entrenched idolatry and injustice that had taken a foothold in their culture and society.

So it wasn't just that they needed to perform sacrifices to get forgiveness for the sins of the forefathers. Again, a forgiveness that we find in Jesus.

It was that they had to undergo this systematic effort to undo all the ways in which idolatry had totally shaped their culture and world.

And again, I wish we could read it. It's a powerful passage. But what is, again, striking after we finish all of that, and it talks about all the things that Josiah did, it still ultimately wasn't successful.

[25 : 55] They never achieved that multi-ethnic community, that holistic flourishing. It sort of ends, like, with him dying, and then it sort of fizzles out.

And I think, again, we have in the background, as we're reading the Old Testament, that here's God's desire for the people of God, but it's never quite fulfilled.

There's always this lingering dissatisfaction with how things are in the Old Testament, or Old Testament, which, again, I think is pointing us forward to the New Testament, to a time when these things will come about with someone who can actually fully accomplish what David, Josiah, Abraham, Moses, all these people were unable to accomplish.

But the multi-ethnic community, the holistic justice that I think that is being pointed to is not less than what the Old Testament envisions. I think it's often more, I think we sometimes even shrink the kind of flourishing injustice that we see described in the Old Testament to something that's even smaller when we move into the New Testament, something that's more narrow than I think we see in the Old Testament, when I think in reality what Jesus is going to usher in is something that is fulfilling these things that God desires in the Old Testament, but that are never truly fulfilled.

And the last sort of place where I'll highlight these themes, and I won't comment much on them because I think they're so powerful and compelling and clear on their own, and we're sort of running to the end of my time.

[27 : 37] But if you'll turn to the book of Isaiah, I'll start by reading from Isaiah 56 and highlight, again, this multi-ethnic community that God envisions.

Starting in verse 1, it says, Again, those words, For soon my salvation will come and my righteousness be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, The Lord will surely separate me from his people. And let not the eunuchs say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord, To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbath, Who choose the things that please me, Who hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name.

Better than sons and daughters, I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, And to be his servants, Everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, And holds fast my covenant, These I will bring to my holy mountain, And make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, For my house shall be called the house of prayer for all peoples. The Lord God who declares the outcasts of Israel declares, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.

[29 : 10] And then moving ahead to just a few chapters to Isaiah 58, It says in verse 1, You cry aloud and do not hold back, Lift up your voice like a trumpet, Declare to my people their transgression, To the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, As if they were a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the judgment of their God. They ask of me righteous judgments, They delight to draw near to God.

Why have we fasted and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves and you take no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, And oppress all your workers.

Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight, And to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day Will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose A day for a person to humble himself?

Is it to bow down his head like a reed, And to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the straps of the yoke, To let the oppressed go free, And to break every yoke?

[30 : 26] Is it not to share your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into your house When you see the naked to cover him, And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, And your healing shall spring up speedily.

Your righteousness shall go before you. The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. So in these passages, We see so clearly and powerfully God's vision for a multi-ethnic community, And God's vision for justice, Especially for the oppressed, And God's vision that the people of God Would be the agent of that.

And as we've traced these themes In different sort of places in scripture, Both different eras and different genres, We've seen, I think, The consistency of these themes.

The multi-ethnic community, The holistic, multi-generational justice. And again, I think these are themes That are really intentionally interwoven In the Old Testament and set up So that the New Testament would continue them.

And so I will stop there And maybe just invite And maybe just invite Good day, y'all.

[32 : 11] So I will be going through Just a couple passages here In the New Testament. Can you hear me all right in the back? A little louder, maybe. All right. I can pause this.

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I got it. Thanks. So, Our format is going to be A little bit different. I'm going to pick Certain stories To discuss And go over and highlight The justice issues And the issues of marginalization And injustice that we see That continues through scripture.

As Matt said, God's vision for his people Is a united, Multi-ethnic community Of believers That practice love Who practice justice And who treat each other As God has called us to.

As Matt had mentioned That, you know, This vision that God had Wasn't completely realized In the Old Testament. And the ironic thing is We don't totally see it In the New Testament either.

The truth of the matter Is that Christ came And died And united us Together Through his body Through his sacrifice Through his death Unfortunately, though For us Christ's death Doesn't completely Eliminate the effects Of sin In our life In a practical In a practical manner We still have to battle With this sin In the flesh Paul talks about it In the book of Romans That he says That there is a war Within my members Although I love The law of God I don't do it The things that I don't Want to do Those things I do The things I want to do Those are the things That I don't do So Paul The apostle Who met The resurrected Christ Still struggled Within his own body With sin And we too Also Go back and forth Between loving God Wanting to do What he wants us to do

[34 : 22] And living in the way That he has called us And Battling with These desires And The nature That is inside of us Inherently Because of the effects Of sin So a couple of observations I want to kind of Point out before we Jump started Is There's about three of them So the first thing Is the concept Of the woke church Now this kind of Starts to delve into A few contemporary issues That we'll deal with Next week But I want to hit on it Because I think that it is Pertinent to our discussion Just As a whole And I believe that it will shape How we're viewing Or how we should view These issues So You may be familiar With the term Woke church If not It was A It is A phrase that was coined By Dr. Eric Mason Who was pastor Of Epiphany Fellowship Church Down In Philadelphia

And The reason he Started this This movement If you will Is to Draw attention To The injustice And the Inequities And The Plight Of African Americans Here in America Because And again As we'll talk about Next week Historically The church in America Has not really done Too much In the way of Fighting against Racial injustice And equality And I mean Even if we go back To slavery Although There were Christians that led The abolition movement You also had a lot of Christians A lot of powerful voices That were proponents Of and for Slavery So This idea Of the woke church Is drawing attention To The plight That Brothers and sisters Within the body Of Christ Are going through Not Woke

W-O-E W-O-K-E Like awake Woke Like I woke up Yes The past sense Of awake So Again This This concept Is just To draw attention To the plight That brothers and sisters In Christ Are facing So He draws his Inspiration For this Well first of all He has taken The phrase Woke Or the word And Taking it From the culture Who has one Uses for it And sort of Redeemed it And run it Through a Biblical filter Within Mainstream Urban culture The term Woke Is usually Used to Identify As

somebody Who is no Longer asleep To what is Really happening In the world It could be Likened to Being aware That The man Is running The system You know Refusing to be Held down by it And Just Not being A slave To everything That everybody Is saying In the media And in Society As a Whole So You know You're not Just being Led along Blindly But you're Actually aware Of everything That's happening Around you Applied to a Biblical And Christian Context This means That we See and We're Aware of The devices Of the Enemy We're Aware of The effects Of sin Not only In our Life But how It affects The world Both locally And systemically And more broadly So again He drew His inspiration For this Phrase Or to Redeem This Phrase From Ephesians Chapter 5 And The main Verse is Verse 14 But I want To go back To verse 6 Where it Says that Let no one deceive You with empty Words For because Of these Things The wrath Of God Comes upon The sons Of disobedience Therefore Do not Become partners With them For at one Time You Were darkness But now You are Light in The Lord Walk as Children Of the Light For the Fruit of Light Is found In all That is Good And right And true And try To discern What is Pleasing To the Lord Take no Part in The unfruitful Works of Darkness But instead Expose Them For it Is shameful To even Speak of The things That they Do in Secret But when Anything Is exposed By the Light It becomes Visible For anything That becomes Visible Is light Therefore It says Awake O sleeper And arise From the Dead And Christ Will shine On you So again This idea Of being Woke Being awakened To everything That is Happening Around Us Again In this Context In which We have Gathered For these Couple of Weeks Is to Shine a Light On The

[39 : 28] Biblical Truth And the Biblical Support For care And concern And to Take action In the Areas Of racial Equality And justice And equity That is Around us Whether or Not we Agree As to The Systemic Nature Of the Issues And how Deep it Actually Goes And who Is responsible For what And what Should be Done The fact Of the Matter Is That brothers And sisters In Christ And people Around the World Are facing Situations In life That aren't Completely They're Not completely Responsible For the State that They are In Yes They may Have been Born There Yes They may Have lived There And decided Not to Leave However As Matt Alluded To earlier The Systemic Nature Of sin And the Way that It can In Infect

Society If you Will In the Way that We live In the Way we Do Things It is Very Insidious And if We aren't Aware of That Then we'll Become proponents And we will Continue to Perpetuate Those similar Systems Not saying That Everything Needs to Be undone However We do Need to Recognize Where Our world Is weak We need To recognize Where the World is Fallen And as Christians With the Light of Christ Shining In them And on Them Need to Step into These spaces And speak The truth Of God And his Love Into these Areas So another Observation I want to Make and Point out Before we Jump in Is about The fact That we Cannot Impose Our Understanding Of race On to The scriptures We In this Society Have come To understand Race As it Was Kind of Drawn out Of Darwinian Evolutionary Theory And that

Different Races And species Are inherently Different So people Who kind of Read Darwin And took His ideas Applied it To humans And said Okay We are This And they Are That And those Individuals Are inherently Different From us Simply because They appear Different Their skin Color is Different And you know they're Not as Wise as We are They're not As civilized As we Are So that Understanding Of race That we Have come To know And Seeing its Effects In our World We can't Apply that To the Scriptures Because they Were living In a Completely Different Time In a Completely Different Context And the Idea Of racism If you Will Didn't Exist In that Way However They still Did have Their Issues Upon Ethnic Lines So that's How we Need to Recognize It As we Approach This Here In the New Testament And That's

The reason Why the Jews Didn't Get along With the Samaritans It wasn't Only a Jewish Religious Issue As far as Purification Goes But that Was an Ethnic Issue The Fact of Somebody Being Jewish Isn't Just a Religious Identity But it Was their Ethnic Heritage So the Issues There are Inseparable The third Observation I want to Bring up Is that And again This is Kind of More pointing Toward Things we Will discuss Next week However I Just want to Lay a Foundation For it Here And that Is that Colorblindness As much As it May seem As an Innocuous Thing Is not A great Thing The reason It is Not Is because God Is not Colorblind We know God is Not colorblind Because God Created a Plethora of

Colors I mean Even just Look around You And just Actually Notice All the Color Information That your Mind Is taking In at This very Moment So Although When people Say oh I'm Colorblind I don't See color I don't Recognize That somebody Is black And I'm White or I'm Black and They're White

While it's Well intended And what they Mean to say Is that Skin color Does not Affect the Way that I will Treat you It's not The most Helpful way To think About it Seeing and Acknowledging The differences In our Melanin Content Isn't Racist It's an Objective Fact I have More melanin Than all Of you It is What it Is Somebody Saying That That's Not a Racist Statement But Subjugating Other People Who are Different And either Lackmelan Or who Have more Subjecting Them to Injustice And marginal Marginalization From a Sense of Superiority

[44 : 30] Superiority Because of It That's Racist That's Wrong That is Unjust So Getting Into The Scriptures Here As I Mentioned A couple Of minutes Ago Is that Christ's Death Does bring Everybody Together People From all Over the World From different Ethnic Backgrounds Christ's Death Does that Successfully And in Him There's no Separation Between us We have Literally Been joined Together As family And we Are eternally Inseparable Because of The blood Of Christ So Because of This Our Individual And communal Ethnic Backgrounds No longer Our superior Our kingdom Identity Is But being Made One in Christ Being now A part of The family Of God

Doesn't Erase Our Ethnic Heritage It doesn't Erase Our cultural Background It doesn't Do away With our Cultural Tradition And the Things that We may Hold dear To As humans Living in This world So like I just Said a Second ago The idea Is not for Us to Replace Our kingdom Identity With what's Earthly But it's To Take part In recognizing The good That each And every One of us Bring From our Backgrounds From our Ethnic Heritage God God is God of Abundance God Doesn't Do Things In a Small Way You know We just Look Looking at The world That he Created The vastness The Multiplicity Of organisms Just The light The amount

Of life In this Universe And the Fact that The universe Is ever Expanding It's an Amazing Thing I always Marvel At the Photos Of space And I remember Going over To the Observatory Here at Yale I mean The planetarium Whatever it's Called And they have On the wall It's a Mural About six Feet high And maybe 15 feet Wide And all You see Is a Bunch of Little Lights On it And if You didn't Know any Better you Would think That it's A picture Of stars But the Person that Was giving us A tour This day Said no Those aren't Stars Those are All galaxies And there's Just so Many Different Colors Billions Of them And they Said those Are galaxies And then my Mind kind of Exploded at that Moment Because it's Like okay If those Are galaxies Now think About the Vastness Of our Galaxy And the Amount of

The fact that we are here spinning on this little blue ball in this vast cosmic chasm you kind of stand back and just say wow god I sit on that thought for a moment that in the midst of you know a universe that spans literally billions of light years and with And yet and still the creator of it all created us and cares for us enough to draw us to himself and it's through this love that he has redeemed us to himself and um our joining together in spite of all of our differences should be a testimony To his love and saving grace Scripture tells us to his love and saving grace Scripture tells us that Christ through his death tore down the dividing wall of hostility And now that there's no more separation between us like I said before we have literally been joined together as brothers as sisters as family eternally

My relationship with you all My relationship with you all is greater and tighter and longer lasting than that of some of my own blood relatives There's gonna come a day when my relationship with them ends but our relationship will continue and last forever It's unfortunate though because within the church today and even as we'll see in the new testament People still found ways to build walls People still found ways to remain separate and and treat other people differently because of this separation Again God's idea is a united people From all over his creation That live together in peace and harmony and expressed his love

[49 : 44] For each other But again, although Christ's death does secure this Doesn't practically work out just yet So the first scripture I want to look at Is in Acts chapter 6 I'm just gonna pick it up at verse 1 It says now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number So the church was growing A complaint by the Hellenists rose against the Hebrews Because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution Excuse me We know that what comes next The disciples, the apostles tell them Choose some men from among your number That will handle this You know, we should be focusing on preaching And prayer Not waiting tables The point I want to bring out here though Is the fact that

These widows It says were being neglected In the daily distribution The The This is a justice issue That we're seeing here It's an injustice that was being committed Oftentimes when we think about the word justice We think about it in a jurisprudence Jurisprudence type of sense We think of it as

being simply retributive You know, somebody does something wrong They have to pay for what they've done We can boil justice down We can boil justice down To someone receiving What is due to them And we often apply that mainly In a judiciary context Law and order Right and wrong But I think there is A flip side to that And somebody It's not Justice isn't only somebody Getting what they deserve When they've done wrong Justice can also be Somebody receiving

What is due to them Simply because they are It's like Jesus said Love your neighbor as yourself As image bearers of God It is a justice issue To treat somebody with dignity And respect Because they are inherently worthy of Said Dignity and respect It doesn't matter What they have Where they're from How they can necessarily Contribute to society It is an injustice To mistreat somebody Who is another image bearer of God To take away from them Or to prevent them From advancing in life And having What they need In order to live So here in this verse We see that These widows Were being neglected They weren't being

Taken care of The reason I think It's fitting To bring this up here Is because of the language Of Luke I feel as though He could have Described the situation In any number of ways There could have been Any number of distinctions That he made But Looking at the language He says It was the Hellenists Had a complaint Against the Hebrews The Hellenists Were Were Greek speaking Jews They were believers But Hebrew was not Their native tongue They were Greek speakers So here we have This ethnic division And that's what Luke Uses to point out What's happening Now I don't want to Impose too much On the text I really want to Kind of just draw this Out from what is said Because we don't know Why the Hebrews Were neglecting The Hellenist widows But again Just looking at the language

And Inferring From this language It probably has Something to do with This Ethnic split So that In itself Is wrong For the For the Hebrews To not Give The resources Equally You know We We read about How the church Exploded After the Holy Spirit Came in Acts Chapter 2 And how they Grew The church 3000 was added To the church That day Peter preached And they Continued To grow In number As I said There in the Beginning of Verse 1 But people Bring People issues When we When we're Saved When we put Our faith In Christ He doesn't Take out Everything Right away Sanctification Is still A process And part Of that Process Is learning To love One another [54 : 47] The way That God Has called Us to And it Means Looking out For one Another And sharing Of what we Have Giving of Ourselves The scripture Says I believe This in 1st John How is it That you Can have The world's Goods And turn your Back against Your brother Who you see Is in need I think We're in a Precarious Situation Ourselves Here in America Especially at This point In history Because of Our technology We have Access to More information Than ever Before And we Can see So much That is Happening Around the World And if We're not Careful It can get Overwhelming And this Sense of Duty and Responsibility To do What is Right and To give And to Make sure That others Are taken Care for And taken Care of I believe

That God Calls us To do Only in All of What we Can do If we Would set Out to Be the Light that Christ has Called us To be If we Would set Out to Be the Example And to Spread the Love of Christ And to Show Individuals What it Means to Be in Christ And if We Amongst Ourselves Could Do that Then The load Gets a little Bit lighter And our Love Becomes a Witness as Jesus told His disciples That it Would be He said People will Know that You are my Disciples by Your love So it Was unfortunate That these Widows Who were Just a Different ethnic Background Weren't being Taken care Of You know Luke doesn't Say that it Was all Widows It was the Hellenists Who had To complain So does This mean That the Hebrew Widows Were being Taken care Of in The daily Distribution Probably Again this

Text doesn't Say so So maybe That wasn't The case But again We see here That People still Although they Were believers Had this Tinge of Well He might be Better than You Or You know Find another Way to Get what it Is that you Need We know That The Religious Leaders of That time Use their The religiosity As an Excuse To not Do We see This in Luke 11 Where Jesus Chastises Those leaders Pull it Up here In

Luke 11 Verse 42 Jesus Says But woe To you Pharisees For you Tithe Men Ruin Every Herb And Neglect Justice And The Love Of God You Ought To Have These You Ought To Have Done Without Neglecting The Others It Was a Common Thing For the For the Leaders Of That Time Or Religious Individuals Of That Time To Hide Behind What They Believed Was the Right Thing To Do Biblically Speaking But Jesus Told Them He's Like Yo You're You're Tithing You're Doing This Over Here And You're Forgetting To Do The Most Important Things Like Yeah What You're Doing Is

Good But There Is More We Also See That In The Parable Of The Good Samaritan How A Priest And A Levite Walked By This Individual Who Appeared To Be Laying Dead In The Road Now I'm

Sure Both The Priest And The Levite Looked At This Individual And The Thought Probably Ran Through His Mind I Can't Deal With This Right Now I Can't Help Him Because I Don't Want To Become Unclean This Man Is Bleeding He Might Be Dead I Don't Know For Sure I Don't Even Want To Mess With It They Felt That They Were Justified Possibly Again The text Doesn't Say But They Probably Felt That They Were Justified In Not Doing Anything Because They Probably Felt That The Law Of God Was On Their Side But The Law Of God Calls Us First And Foremost To Love God And To Love Each Other Which Means Making Sacrifices Doing The Uncomfortable Thing Doing The Thing That We May Not Feel Ready Or Fully Capable Of Doing There In The Parable That Jesus Told Of The Good Samaritan It Was Particularly

[59 : 56] Jarring To Jewish Ears To Hear That A Samaritan Was Good And That The Samaritan In The Story Did The Right Thing And It Was The Samaritan Receiving The Commendation From Jesus Again Ethnically Speaking The Jews Did Not Like The Samaritans They Looked At Them As Half Breeds So That Story Was Super Jarring And It Probably Shook Them To Their Core And Similarly For Us Today We Need To Be Shaken In The Same Way It Is Jarring When We Hear About Just The Issues Of Our Time And The Way That It's Received In The Way People Really Rub Against Or Fight Back Against What They Perceive As Being Inaccurate Assessments Of The Culture You Know By Pointing Out That Nobody

Today Has Owned Slaves I Get It By Pointing Out Today That Nobody In Our Circles Have Contributed To Building The Societal Structures And Systems That May Or May Not Be Unjust You May Not Have Contributed To It You May Not Have Participated In Its Building But There May Still Be A Responsibility That You Bear To Repairing The Damage That Is Caused And Another Issue Gets To Well There Is No Damage That's All Imaginary That's All Made Up And Again Not To Get Too Far A Of Our But The The Point Is That When Others Are In Pain As The Man Who Was Walking Down To Jericho When People Are Suffering It's Not

Up To Us To Judge The Validity Of Their Suffering It's Not Up To Us To Determine Whether Or Not The Suffering They're They Say They're Going Through Is Valid I Believe The Love Of Christ Compels Us To Listen And To Have A Heart And To Hear Them Out And To Walk With Them And Not Only walk With Them But Care For Them And Whatever Means That We Have That Is Possible So That Was One One Issue There In Acts One Division The Next One I Want To Look At We See In Galatians Chapter Two God

If We Got Just A Little Less Wind That Would Be Great Keep My Page Is In Order Here So Galatians Two At Verse Eleven This Here Is The Account Of Where Paul Says That He Opposed Peter This Is What It Says But When Cephas Came To Antioch I Opposed Him To His Face Because He Stood Condemned Before Certain Men Came From James He Was Eating With The Gentiles But When They Came He Drew Back And Separated Himself Fearing The Circumcision Party And The Rest Of The Jews Acted Hypocritically Along With Him So That Even Barnabas Was Led Astray By Their Hypocrisy But

When I Saw That Their Conduct Was Not In Step With The Truth Of The Gospel I Said To Cephas Before Them All If You Thought A Jew Live Like A Gentile And Not Like A Jew How Can You Force The Gentiles To Live Like Jews Again Remembering That We're Not Imposing Our Ideas Of Race On The First Century Jewish Church Or The First Century Church Their Divisions Again Were Ethnic Lines Where Were You Born Who Were Your Fathers What Land Are They From Thus Where The Divisions Were So The Gentiles Were Everybody Who Was Not A Jew Here Paul Paul's Issued

[65 : 13] He He Didn't He Didn't Want to These Other Jews Were Going To Think Of Him What They Were Going To Say This Here What What We See Is Peter Wanting To Be On The Side Of Perceived Power Those Who Were In Charge Those Who Were Running Things He Wanted To Be Right In Their Eyes So When They Weren't Around He Felt Like He Could You Know Mingle And Eat With The Gentiles But The Moment These Other Men From James Showed Up He Had To Pull Back Again This Isn't Just A A Jewish Ceremonial Issue Yeah Some Of That May Have Played Into It However Because Of The Distinctions That Are Drawn For From Negatives The Hypocrisy Is In That In Christ Peter

Was Legitimately Free To Eat With The Gentiles He Was Legitimately Free To Hang Out With Them But Those Of The Circumcision Party Those Who Wanted To Make The Believers Jewish He Wanted Them To Follow The Law Peter Still Wanted To Kind Of Play Up To Their Standards And Their Expectations He Wanted To Play Up To The Power Instead Of Identifying With Those Who May Been On The Margins Those Who Didn't Have As Much Power Those Who Didn't Have The Resources And Those Who Weren't Setting The Policies And Making The Rules In In In In In Paul And Paul Had To Chuck Him And He Told Him He Said You're Not In Step With The Truth Of The Gospel You're Not Walking Rightly You're Not Walking According To The Way Christ Has Called Us To And

Paul Recognized That He Was Able To Do This And He Tells Us That He Did This He Tells Us In First Corinthians 9 22 He Says That I Become All Things To All Men That By All Means I May Win Some To The Weak I Become One As Who Is Weak To The Jews I Become As A Jew To Those Under Law I Become As One Under The So Paul Recognized This Freedom And This Latitude That He Had To Live And Not Only That Not Just Live But Live In Such A Way That He Could Connect With Other Individuals No Matter What No Matter Their Background No Matter What Their Beliefs Were No Matter What Their Traditions Were It Gets Interesting To Think About Where Paul Talks About I Believe In First Corinthians About Eating Meat That Has Been Sacrificed To Idols We Know That Was A Big No No For The Jews To Eat Meat That Had Been You Know Getting Offered In Sacrifice To Another Deity Paul Tells Us That We Know That Idol Is Nothing We Know That It Doesn't Actually Exist We Know That It Has No Power So Why Not If You Want Eat The Hamburger Eat The Doesn't Matter But For Conscience Sake Eat Whatever Is Put Before You Don't Ask Any Questions About It Don't Just Say Thank You And Enjoy Give Thanks And Have Fun With It But He Says If Somebody Says Oh This Meat Was Offered In Sacrifice To This Other Deity He Like Then You Don't Eat For The Sake Of Conscience But Not For Your Conscience But For Their Conscience Also If You're Around A Weaker Brother Or Sister Who Doesn't Believe That You Can Eat You Know Meat Or Meat That Has Been Sacrificed

He's Like Don't Eat In Christ We Have The Freedom To Do And We Have The Freedom To Not Do Actually That Freedom To Not Do Is Just Recognizing That Although We Can It Doesn't Make Us Better Or Worse For Not Doing It Out Of Love If What I Do Will Offend You I Don't Have To Do That I Recognize That I'll Be Fine Either Way And When You Leave If I Wanted To Have The Beer I Have The Beer But If It Offends You That I Drink It While You're Here Then I Won't Because It Doesn't Have That Much Control Over Me Like I Don't Need To Do This And I'm Not Going To Gloat And I'm Not Going To Impose This Freedom That I Feel That I Have On To You If You Feel That It's Wrong Because Then That Wouldn't Be Loving For One To Make Another Go Against Their Conscience Is Wrong But

[70:17] Here In This Text Paul I'm Sure You Had to You Have Been Fine Either Way But Instead You Decided To Be A Hypocrite And Not Only Were You Hypocritical But These Other Jews That Were With You Even Barnabas You Made Barnabas A Hypocrite Like You Are Really Out Of Line Not Just Out Of Line He Said He Stood Condemned So Just Out Of These Couple Of Passages And I'm Sure That There Are More Places That We Can Go Here In The Text To See Where These Divisions Among Ethnic Lines Were Drawn And Caused People To Act In Certain Ways But Just From These Two Where The Hellenist Widows Were Neglected And Where Peter Wanted To Be Associated With The

Popular Guys The Popular Kids We See That That's Not Fulfilling God's Idea Of Righteousness And Justice It's Not Fulfilling God's Idea Of Doing Justice And What Is Right Giving People What Is Their Due For For The Sake Of Their Humanity The Very Fact that They Are Created In The Image Of God Is More Than Enough To Give Them All Of The Love All Of The Respect And All Of The Aid And Assistance And Help That We Can Must So Thankfully We Do See It In The New Testament Though Where This Picture Finally Is Realized In Revelation Chapter Seven Revelation Seven John Talks About The 144 Thousand Individuals Who Were Sealed And It's Very Interesting To Kind Of Break That Down And Discuss What It Actually Means And Who Is It Literally 144 Thousand I'm Not Going To Begin To Get Into It Now But It's It's A Fun Little Study If You Have The Time Our Focus This Morning Will Be In Verse Nine And After Where John Says After This I Looked And Behold A Great Multitude That No One From Every Nation From All Tribes And Peoples And Languages Standing Before The Throne And Before The Lamb Clothed In White Robes With Palm Branches In Her Hands Crying Out With A Loud Voice Salvation Belongs To Our

God Who Sits On The Throne And To The Lamb John

In His Vision Of The Future To Come Of The Culmination And Of The Fulfillment Of God's Idea For His People When He Sees This Picture He Said He Saw People From Every Nation Every Tribe Every Tongue God This Kind Of Goes Back To The Point I Said Earlier About God Not Being Colorblind Even John Here In This Verse He Wasn't Colorblind He Recognized That There Were Differences Differences Among The People There In Heaven Before The Throne Of God Those Differences Those Distinctions Were Beautiful That's What Makes This Passage Amazing Is That In Our Minds We Recognize The Magnitude Of It That People From Literally All Over The World From So Many Different Cultures

From All Times In History Speak So Many Different Languages Of All Different Skin Complexions All In One Place Worshipping Their Creator It Is Possible To Have A Foretaste Of That Moment Here And Now I'm Thankful Because I feel As Though That We Have A Bit Of That Here At Trinity This May Not Be In The Fullest Expression It May Not Be In The Within The Greatest Capacity However Leave This A Forte Just A Small Little Small Little Set Of The Goodness That Is The Unity That We Have In Christ Oftentimes When You hear People Talk About Unity And Togetherness What They're Really Talking About Is Sameness They're Saying As long As you You look This way [75:36] Or you Dress This way You believe Exactly like This and there Are no Differences If you Like If you Like This type Of Music Then We'll Accept You If You Vary Or if You Deviate From This Standard Then You You can Be here But you're Not really A part Oftentimes The unity That is Discussed Is Really Assimilation And It might Be good Maybe It might Be okay For some For others Not so Much The point Is There That One group Forcing another Group to Change And to Fit in To their Standard Is what's Wrong I can Imagine Peter There in Galatians There may Have been A part Of them That wanted Those Gentiles To be Jews I mean

Because That's What Paul Says How Are you As a Jew Wanting These Gentiles To live Like a Jew If you're Out here Being a Hypocrite Yourself Why would You try To force Them To be Something That you're Not Completely You know Our Standards Our Ideals Of life And Equality And Justice Can Be Skewed Our Idea Of Right May Have Come To us Through This Filter Of Culture And History And The Experiences Of Our Own Ancestors As Matt Said You know When we When we Approach The Scriptures We Don't Approach It As Objectively As We May Feel But We Always Come To The Scripture With A Certain Filter We're Always Looking at It Through A Particular Lens And Different Cultures View the Scriptures Through Their Particular Lenses And That's Not Wrong Because The Truth Of God Is The

Truth And Although Different Ethnic Groups And Cultures May Differ On Certain Topics And Beliefs I'm So Grateful Because The Truth Of The Gospel Is The Same Throughout So We Can Have Differences And We Can Be Split On You Know Tertiary And Third Tier Type Issues But As Long As Christ Remains There In The Center As Long As He Remains The The Source And Focus Of Our Salvation Then We're Good You know We Can Kind Of Walk It Out From There And Discuss Different Issues But Those Differences Shouldn't Become Divisions At Least In The Capacity That They Are For Us Today In Certain Places So God's

Vision Is Coming To Past Because It Can't Not God Set Out For It To Happen That's What It's Going To Be So When We See The Picture In Revelation Of God's People United From Everywhere We Can Begin To Live In That Even Now And Push For Equal Treatment Of Everybody And Push For Equal Access And Support Of All Groups Of People Regardless Of How Different They May Be And Not Play To Those Who May Be In Authority Regardless Of Whether Or Not They Say They're Looking At It Through A Biblical Lens They're Using The Scripture To Justify Their Actions Or In Action Because That's What We Definitely Don't Want To Do We Don't Want To Rely On The Scriptures Or This Over This Overly Idealistic Religiosity

You know This Extreme Fidelity To The Scriptures We Don't Want To Be Like The Priest And The Levite In The Story Of The Good Samaritan Because We Should Have Learned The Lesson That God Is Looking For Us To Express Is The Love That Calls Us Into Action And To Open Up Our Eyes To The World Around Us And See What Is Happening And Not Turn A Blind Eye To It But He Caused Us To Be Awake And Not Asleep