

Florida Georgia District LCMS

A Day of Prayer and Reflection on Racism and Injustice

Reflection on Repentance for Maundy Thursday, April 1, 2021

Jesus serves us so we serve one another

On February 19, 2021 Florida Georgia LCMS, District President, Rev. Dr. Gregory S. Walton, convened a group of eleven leaders for a discussion regarding their experiences and thoughts on racism as it exists and impacts the life of the members of the Florida Georgia District. Some of the outcomes of this meeting are to discover ways to strengthen the sensitivity to issues without legalism or judgment, to look forward to the future, and provide worship resources for a potential Day of Repentance in which the members of our district can repent of the sin of racism, reflect on their participation in sinfulness by deeds done and left undone, and participate in some activity that will help to move forward in healing.

The group agreed that Maundy Thursday would be a day to reflect upon how we have failed in our service to one another because it is the day in which our Lord himself, serves his disciples in foot washing and instituting the means of grace, the Lord's Supper. What follows are three activities in which you may participate to move forward in your life under the cross acknowledging that racism exists, and we will wage war against it as we do all sin. The activities are:

- 1) Bible Study
- 2) Coloring page to promote conversation with children
- 3) Litany to use for reflection, confession, and forgiveness

Bible Study - Imago Dei – The Image of God

We are Christians. We are Lutheran Christians. As Lutheran Christians we believe, teach, confess, and practice the truth that the scriptures are for us the only rule and norm for faith and life. As we approach life and all our behavior, we subjugate everything to the word of God. Our personal beliefs, our social understanding, and ethnic practices must all of subject to and placed are secondary to the witness of scripture. This goes directly to our understanding of humanity and the quality and standard of our life together.

The 1994 CTCR document, *Racism and the Church: Overcoming the Idolatry*, is bold to say that racism is idolatry because it puts ethnicity and race ahead of the testimony of scripture. Racism subjugates the biblical narrative to science, culture, and personal preference, custom and tradition. We have believed the lie that some are superior to others. That makes a god of the superior and that is idolatry. Please see the CTCR document for a thorough discussion of the issue. This document is available online at the following link: <https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=2ZSjBpgiY39Eo1IH1vqCgl79YUGmfrve>

I. Creation of Man

The testimony of scripture is that man is created in the Image of God. Genesis 1:26-27. All of humankind have their beginning with this common set of DNA from our first parents Adam and Eve. There is not distinction apparent in creation.

II. We are sick with sin, each one of us

As a result of being tricked by the enemy, the serpent in the garden, the man and woman sinned and fell from the grace of God our Father. This tragic event sickens humankind with sin that clings to us from our first father and mother. This sin, this illness, causes us to make distinctions, is the ground of hatred and confusion in our life and in our world. Our Father promises that a Savior will come to crush the head of the one who brings division. Genesis 3:1-15

III. Jesus is our medicine

Our Father sends us the Savior in human flesh in the person and work of His Son Jesus the Messiah. Jesus comes to suffer, bleed, and die to save us from the wages of sin, hell, and death. Jesus takes our sin upon himself and releases into us his holiness and faithfulness to the testimony of the Father. In Christ we are one people unified and set apart in holiness to serve our God and Father. Romans 6:22-23

IV. Some lies and deceptions to support racism

- a. The mark that was placed on Cain as a consequence of killing his brother Abel was to make him dark. Genesis 4:15. This thought is nowhere in the text and defies reason. This narrative would occur in the Middle Eastern world where people are brown. If the Father wanted to make Cain's skin in a distinctive way to curse him, he would not make him brown but white like a leper.
- b. Noah cursed all brown and black people when he cursed Ham, the father of all African nations. Genesis 9:24-27 Noah never cursed Ham but rather cursed his youngest son, Canaan, which has been a land where there is unrest even until today. Ham and his other sons who are the fathers of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and other great civilizations were not cursed and even prospered greatly.

V. Some things we can do

- a. Let the scriptures speak and do not adorn them with our culture and other issues.
- b. Pray for consciousness of all the ways we have sinned against others because we have believed a lie.
- c. Be bold to represent Jesus in word and deed when we are in conversation in which 'those people' are being castigated and maligned. Know that 'those people' are any people different from us so we all have opportunity to bear witness to the truth.
- d. Have a conversation with our children and grandchildren to be sure that they are bearing witness to the truth of scripture. There are coloring sheets and a narrative attached to assist in this conversation.

Conversation with Children

Allow time for questions. Pray for wisdom from the Father to be open and to address the concerns of the children in ways that will promote love, health, and faithfulness to the will of God. Visit this website for additional ideas and instructions. <https://www.baby-chick.com/sesame-street-town-hall-explain-racism-to-kids>

- I. Use this song as an introduction to the conversation.

Jesus loves the little children (song)

Jesus loves the little children
All the children of the world
Red and yellow, black and white
They are precious in his sight
Jesus loves the little children of the world

Jesus cares for all the children
All the children of the world
Red and yellow, black and white
They're all precious in His sight
Jesus cares for all the children of the world

Jesus loves the little children
All the children of the world
Red and yellow, black and white
They're all precious in His sight
Jesus came to save the children of the world

Jesus saves the little children
All the children of the world
Red and yellow, black and white
They're all precious in His sight
Jesus loves the little children of the world

Written by: C. Herbert Woolston, Music by: George F. Root,
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- II. Coloring Page and crayons
Attached three coloring pages that can be handed out to children to facilitate this conversation about fairness, kindness, and love for all people.

Narrative

- I. Some people say that Jesus loves some more than others

- Jesus loves us all the same. We are all his children, and our first parents are Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Hatred came into the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. God our Father still loves us all the same but now we mistreat one another.
- II. God our Father and his Son Jesus love us all the same.
Jesus came to save everyone in the world not just some people. God the Father loves us all equally and everyone who believes in Jesus is a child of God. Their skin color, eye color, language they speak, or country they come from does not matter to our Father. He loves you and me, and them all the same.
 - III. If you see someone being mistreated, teased, because they are different first, don't participate in being unkind and evil. Second, tell the teacher or an adult who will help clear the confusion. Third, be a friend to the person being teased.
 - IV. Answer whatever questions the children have honestly and biblically.
 - V. Have the conversation again at an appropriate time.

Litany of Reflection on Racial Reconciliation

Please read through this Psalm and spend the day in reflection on these verses. Some thoughts have been provided to aid in meditation.

Psalm 139:1-24 (ESV)

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

We cannot hide our sin from the Father. He knows our sin and failure. We are fully open and transparent before him. He already knows and is expecting our confession and contrition instead of hiding from the truth. We are sick, Lord and are not even sure we desire to be made well in the area of racial reconciliation.

(2) You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. (3) You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. (4) Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. (5) You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. (6) Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Our Father knows our thoughts. Confess what you really think about ‘those people’ and ask the Lord for healing. He knows the love or hatred in our hearts for our brothers and sisters who are different from us. The Lord has us surrounded on every side and will protect us from the enemy around us. The hand of the Lord is upon us and grants us the grace to be forgiven and to go forward in mercy and peace.

(7) Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? (8) If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! (9) If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, (10) even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

Come on people of God. We cannot escape baptismal grace. We cannot flee from the presence of our Father who wants to walk with us. Our ‘fig leaves’ are useless in His presence. The ‘hand of the Lord’ will lead us, and his right hand will hold us so that we conquer and are victorious over sin of all stripes including prejudices and racism. We confess Lord. We are your baptized people, and we have this opportunity to be better.

Wet your fingers, wet your hand and run it across your forehead. Feel the coolness of the water and remind yourself, “I am a baptized child of God. I am forgiven. I can be bold in confession of sin. I can cling to life in, with, and under the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ. Feel the coolness of the water, remind yourself, confess, receive the reminder of forgiveness in the coolness of the water.

(11) If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” (12) even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. (13) For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. (14) I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. (15) My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. (16) Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Our Father makes no distinction in hand upon his creation. Each human being has been formed, knit together, fearfully and wonderfully made, and the eyes of our Father behold us in the depths of the secret place His eyes see us without distinction. He had made us with full intent, on purpose, with a specific skin color. He has placed us in a family, society, and culture with ethnicity. There are things that we can celebrate that are in line with His truth. There are things of which we need to repent because they are human invention, human thoughts that do not reflect the truth of our Father. This is hard work. We have the grace to be bold to perform it.

(17) How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! (18) If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you. (19) Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! (20) They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. (21) Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? (22) I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies. (23) Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting!

Lead me, Guide me along the way. Lord if you lead me I cannot stray. Lord, let me walk each day with thee. Lead me O Lord, lead me. I love what you love, O Lord, and order my steps in that way. I hate what you hate, O Lord, and avoid that which is not pleasing in your sight. Teach me your ways Father. Affirm in me that which honors your children and your creation. Correct the things in me that are against your will and contrary to your way.

Confession

Almighty God, merciful heavenly Father, I come before you this day confessing that I have sinned against you and against your creation. I know some of the things I have done that have disappointed you. There are other things that I have done but do not know or understand. I lay it all before your throne today, Father, confessing things done and left undone, regarding my behavior toward my neighbors who are different from me in race, creed, skin color, and even religion. I throw myself on the mercy of your Son, Jesus my Savior, and plead for your forgiveness today. Father, you have served me, and I desire to serve you and your people of all nations. Come to me Father. Help me to know my sin. Forgive me. Help me to reform my sinful life and lead me in the way of life eternal. We decree, declare, and command the blessing, imploring you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Absolution (ESV)

Psalm 103:11-14

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; (12) as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (13) As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. (14) For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

Psalm 32:1-2 A Maskil of David. (ESV)

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (2) Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Acts 3:19-21 (ESV)

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, (20) that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, (21) whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Luke 7:47-50 (ESV)

Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” (48) And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” (49) Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” (50) And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”