

Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

June 28, 2015

“How Can America Get Rid of Racism”



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Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

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Live Life Fully Alive!

Psalm 30:4-5

Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Luke 10:30-35

Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."

How America Can Get Rid Of Racism

Back in Michigan a few years ago, almost every day for several weeks, I would drive past a building that was set back, away from the road. The building had a sign on it that said, "The Alamo Club." And I remember thinking: Are there that many Texans in Michigan who want to remember the Alamo? Then one day I took a closer look at the sign. It didn't say, "The Alamo Club." It said, "The Alano Club." Alcoholics Anonymous? Hello! My apparent need for remedial reading aside: Alcoholics and drug addicts first have to acknowledge that they have a problem before they can get rid of their addiction to alcohol and drugs.

If America wants to get rid of racism, it has to do the same thing: It first has to acknowledge that it has a problem with racism before America can get rid of racism. We can't pretend that racism doesn't exist. We have to acknowledge it. When

America can acknowledge that racism exists, that's the first step to getting rid of racism.

It's like when Jesus encountered that Canaanite woman, a Gentile, a non-Jew. According to the Bible, her daughter was possessed by a demon. She asked Jesus to cure her daughter. Jesus told her he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then she begged Jesus to cure her daughter. Jesus told her it isn't fair to take the children's food and give it to the dogs. Then she told Jesus that even dogs eat the crumbs from the master's table. Jesus said her faith had saved her daughter and the daughter was cured instantly.

Apparently, if we take that Bible story literally (and a lot of people say they take the Bible literally), Jesus at some point must have thought he came to earth only for the Jews. But after his encounter with that Canaanite woman, that Gentile, that non-Jew, Jesus apparently realized that he came to earth for everyone. Christians can be thankful that Jesus came to that realization. Just like we'll all be thankful when America realizes it has a problem with racism.

Theologian Karl Barth said a preacher should write a sermon with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. That's pretty much how I wrote today's sermon. You couldn't pick up a newspaper or watch the evening news the past week or so without hearing about the killing of nine African-Americans recently in a church in Charleston, South Carolina, by a white racist. He confessed to killing the nine black churchgoers, because he said blacks are taking over the country.

But it wasn't just that tragic story that prompted this sermon. It was also the killing of a black man in North Charleston, South Carolina; he was shot in the back by a white police officer who's been indicted for murder. And the 12-year-old black boy in Cleveland, carrying a toy gun, who was shot and killed by a white police officer. And the white police officer who roughed up a 14-year-old black girl at a pool party in Texas. Then there's the black guy in New York City who was choked to death by a white cop. Then there's the unarmed black teenager in Ferguson, Missouri, who was shot and killed by a white cop.

During the Rodney King case - he was the black LA motorist who was nearly beaten to death by a bunch of white cops back in the '90s - I remember seeing an interview with a black guy who said in the past year he'd been pulled over by the cops 50 times for the crime of DWB: Driving While Black. Can you imagine being pulled over by the cops about once a week, just because of the color of your skin?

Examples of racism abound. But what is racism? The dictionary defines racism as treating people poorly or violently because of their race; and it's the belief that one or more races of people are inferior to one or more other races of people.

Comedian Jeff Foxworthy has made a living saying: You might be a redneck if. You might be a redneck if: You go to your family reunion looking for a date. To paraphrase Jeff Foxworthy: You might be a racist if: You've ever told a racist joke. You've never had a black friend. You've never had a black person over to your house. You'd never date outside your race and you'd never want your children to date outside your race. You might be a racist if: You fly the Confederate flag.

More and more people are coming to realize that the Confederate flag is a racist symbol. The governor of South Carolina says the Confederate flag should no longer fly on the grounds of the state capital. The governor of Alabama has already taken down the four Confederate flags from the grounds of the state capital. Mississippi's State flag is problematic, since woven into the state flag is the Confederate flag.

Some argue that the Confederate flag represents the South's heritage, and that's why people fly it on the grounds of state capitals and in front of their homes. But I lived in Germany for three years and I didn't see one Nazi flag flying in front of anyone's home and it didn't fly on the grounds of the capital.

"But pastor, that's because the Germans are embarrassed by their heritage." Yes. So shouldn't Southerners be embarrassed by their heritage? Most historians agree that the Civil War was started by the South so slavery could continue to exist. And the

South tried to secede from the United States of America, which many people would call treason. Are slavery and treason really a heritage people in the South should be proud of? When people admit that the Civil War was about the South wanting to keep slavery, and it was wrong, then America will be another step closer to getting rid of racism.

Moses was up on the mountain, talking to God. Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, you know, because he was talking to God. The people got anxious, waiting for Moses, thinking that God had abandoned them. So they urged Moses' brother, Aaron, to "make gods for us." So Aaron melted down peoples' gold rings and formed a golden calf, which people worshiped as a god. When Moses found out about it, he was angry; he came down from the mountain, and he got rid of the golden calf.

The Confederate flag is the South's golden calf, which some people seem to worship as a god. And just like Moses did, they need to get rid of it. The Confederate flag should not be flying on any flag pole in America, any more than a Nazi flag should be flying on any flag pole in Germany. (Or America, for that matter.) And it shouldn't be on anyone's license plate. And it shouldn't be on anyone's belt buckle. When people get rid of the Confederate flag, America will be another step closer to getting rid of racism.

Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus said a man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers, who left him half dead by the side of the road. Two people passed him by without offering him any help. But then a Samaritan came along, bandaged him up, and paid for him to stay for a few days at a nearby inn. What makes this story interesting is that the Jews hated the Samaritans. It was a racist hatred. So by making a Samaritan the hero of the parable, Jesus was basically saying, we should all treat each other the same, we should all love one another, and we should all love our neighbor as our self, regardless of race.

I think it's cool to know that Jesus spoke against racism 2,000 years ago. It's also cool to know that if people would just follow

the teachings of Jesus, especially people who call themselves Christians, and love everyone, regardless of race, that's another way America can get rid of racism.

The media have done their part to try to get rid of racism in America. For example, on TV, where a white Captain Kirk kissed a black Uhura, and in the movies, where a black Morgan Freeman (no relation) has played the president and God.

On the radio, Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder had a hit song years ago that I believe moved us closer to getting rid of racism in America. "Ebony and Ivory." Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder sing, "Ebony and ivory, live together in perfect harmony: Side by side on my piano keyboard, oh Lord, why don't we?" Why don't we?

Slavery has been called America's original sin. Racism is a continuation of that sin. America eventually got rid of the sin of slavery. Now, America must get rid of the sin of racism. I believe it can and I believe it's starting to: By acknowledging that racism exists in America, by acknowledging that the Civil War was about slavery and was wrong, by removing racist symbols like the Confederate flag from American soil (and clothing), and by following the words of Jesus, "Love one another." If we keep it up, we will all be able one day to get rid of racism in America. And to live together in perfect harmony.

Let us pray...

*God of Love,
Help us to be aware of racism.
Help us to get rid of racism.
And help us to live together in perfect harmony.
Now and forevermore.
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*



*Menifee
United Church of Christ*



*Whoever you are,
Wherever you are on life's journey
You are welcome here!*

*Jesus didn't reject people
Neither do we*



THE GOLDEN RULE

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*
Judaism

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*
Christianity

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*
Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*
Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*
Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*
Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*
Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*
Humanism