

THE CHRISTIAN AND RACE

"let **justice** roll down like waters, and **righteousness** like an ever-flowing stream."
(Amos 5:24)

Martin Luther King reminded a half of a million protesters outside the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 that all men were created equal with "inalienable rights"; quoting from the US Bill of Rights. As noted in the previous post, King drew upon the Bible teachings that all people are created equal in the image of God and therefore are of infinite value, whatever our station in life: the master / servant class in previous centuries, or in today's terminology socio-economic status, ethnic background, or gender.

From my reading of the Bible, it is not the intrinsic value or human rights inherent, it is rather human rights bestowed from above. It is not just that man recognises that man is of value and dignity but it is the **value of life** that God puts on him. God gives life but also takes away life.

Therefore, whether one is mentally retarded, deformed physically from birth, we do not throw them on the scrap heap. The same with girl babies in the ancient world in some countries that were left out in the open to die because of the preference for boys. It was the Christians in the Greco-Roman world that led to the end of this vile practice.

The same with race. It is a tragedy that the English among others became wealthy out of the slave trade. For example, **John Newton** the slave trader who later repented and became an Anglican minister. He of course wrote the words of the popular hymn *Amazing Grace*. Ethnicity is part of who God made us and we retained the same ethnicity when we get our new glorious resurrected bodies. When our Lord Jesus appeared in the Upper Room he was the same **Jewish man** with the same **Aramaic Galilean accent** but with the scars of the nails in his hands and the wound that spear pierced his side.

Slavery was a filthy way of getting rich and then working long hours picking cotton and other back breaking jobs in the warmer Southern Confederate States of the US. "It is quitting time" called out the foreman in one of the opening scenes of the film "Gone with the Wind". There is no such thing as white supremacy or any other nationality supremacy; as we are one of the same humanity, *Imago Dei*. Slave labour is an affront to the living God who desires all people to be treated

equally, paid the same for the same job whether male or female, white or black. How do we treat our house servants / maids?

Ethnicity got in the way of the growth of the Christian Church. See the Book of Acts. Despite knowing the Great Commission, the apostles did not want to leave the comfort of the city of Jerusalem nor the province of Judea. It took a persecution for them to go into Samaria. It needed a vision from the Lord for the apostle Peter to recognise that Cornelius the Roman Centurion needed the Gospel of grace and forgiveness as well. He was too Jewish in outlook. Are we too ethnic centred as well? We do have our "coloured" blind spots.

The apostle Paul in Galatians 3 and Ephesians 2 & 3 highlighted the unity that we believers have in Christ Jesus. "There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, slave nor free, male or female in Christ." There was some tension in the Pauline churches between the Jews and non-Jews and Paul had to address the problem. Not just Jewish believers; they took a while to get used to the ethnic diversity in South Galatia, Ephesus, Corinth, etc.

The church is an international one involving folk from "every nation, tribe, people (group) and language". There are four Greek words used here to describe our background. Our nationality hides the fact that there may exist different tribal groups, people groups and different languages in the same country. How good is this: a unity in diversity; the Christian Gospel crosses racial boundaries!

The elect of God down through the ages form the "communion of saints"; "the church militant"; thus we need to look beyond our immediate church and see the world wide church. I got a great buzz when I (as an ABC¹) attended my first OCF² Conference when students from different South East Asian countries met and sang praises to our great God or when you attend a non-English worship service in another country; the music is different; they do worship differently. We are NOT the only Christians worshipping God with our kind of music. The Gospel music in Harlem (NYC) as one expression of African American Christianity.

Sometimes I wonder whether our particular **Christian subculture** blinds us to the **ethnic diversity** within God's household!? So don't be too hard on our fellow Jewish Christians in the Pauline churches; we would have probably acted in the same way ie new converts ought to keep certain feasts days, observe the food laws, etc or words to that effect; we would say to them!

A Call to Repentance

Therefore I suspect most of us are "racist" at heart in that we belong in tribal groups; whether it be the dialect (Hokkien or Cantonese; Teochew or Hakka,) or different social class; the English Upper Class and the working class of the North and what accent you have!? e.g. the upstairs and downstairs in Downton Abbey.

Let alone across different countries and skin colour. You have the traditional rivalries between the English and the French; the Chinese and the Japanese, etc. Race is not just tied to ethnicity but often involves their religious background.

Albert Mohler suggests that it is not just individual sin but also **structural sin** that we ought to repent from. The prophet Jeremiah said, "The human heart is **"deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt"**. We tend to view people of different races from our standpoint; when we should as Christians make an effort to "put our feet in the other person's moccasins" (an old native American saying) where possible for deeper cross-cultural understanding. Grace should abound.

One of the great things about living in OZ³ is the multi-racial / multi-religious community that is beginning to take shape from the Anglo-Aussie since the 1950's. This is the consequence of the post-WW2⁴ immigrants from Europe and the last 3 decades from SE Asia and over 100 countries around the world. One of the great benefits is the plethora types of **FOOD!**

Author: Jack Mock / Elder of CCC ©2020

Footnote:

1. ABC: Australian Born Chinese
2. OCF: Overseas Christian Fellowship
3. OZ: Australia
4. WW2: World War Two