

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabile.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabile.org).

**Date:** January 31, 2010

**Title:** “Human Equality and the Justice of God”

**Text:** Acts 17:16-28

**Theme:** The sanctity of life results in human equality and is under the all pervasive and impartial justice of God.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

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#### Introduction:

In the providence of God He has worked in such a way that our nation has placed two significant ideas in our national calendar of events. First, there is January 22 when we mark and celebrate life of children both before and after birth. Second, there is January 18 when we mark and celebrate racial equality. **Both of these events speak to one issue and that is the solidarity and sacredness of all life.** It has not been a part of our past history to note the work of Martin Luther King Jr. in pushing for racial equality and reconciliation. This year our government set aside January 18, 2010 to mark the contributions Martin Luther King Jr. to racial equality. I wish to elevate our study from simply being about racism and lift it to the level of any and all injustice based on color, country, creed, or culture.

I am not deceived as to the impossibility of this apart from the cross. Ultimately this objective will only happen when King Jesus sits on the throne of David and rules with a rod of iron. Yet this "not yet" aspect of His reign is to be "already" present in the Church, and it is this present reality and future hope that we now labor in and for.

Although none of us would readily admit being a racist, I believe some of our attitudes toward those of different color, country, creed, and culture is systemic. Part of our arrogance comes in the form of our patriotism. I do not believe we have a stronghold on this issue. Our view of race or gender superiority is not exclusively ours. This morning in an attempt to speak to issues that affect us severely I will present you with four thoughts with the desire that God would heal us of an injustice that I believe is a consequence of the fall. I do not believe I see this expressed in a blatant manner, but my desire is to challenge us to carefully consider how we might protect all life regardless of color, country, creed, or culture. Let this study protect us from ever discriminating against anyone no matter what their color, country, creed, or culture. Let me begin with a fuller statement by Pastor John Piper of Bethlehem Baptist Church.

Tomorrow is Martin Luther King Day. The existence of this Memorial Day is very significant in America, and very significant to the church of Christ in America. Perhaps nobody in the history of America was hated and loved with more passion than Martin Luther King. His non-violent approach to overturning the social and legal indignities done to African-Americans was enraging to millions of whites. And his heroic stature among blacks and millions of other whites is huge.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born January 15, 1929 (hence this week's holiday). On April 4, 1968, at 6:00 P.M., just outside room 306 of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, the 39-year-old Martin Luther King stood by the railing looking out over some rundown buildings just beyond Mulberry Street. James Earl Ray took aim with a

.30 caliber rifle and blew away the right side of King's face and neck. He died at St. Joseph's hospital an hour and five minutes later. The non-violent voice against the rage of racism was gone.

In Atlanta an FBI agent yelled, "They finally got the s.o.b.!" White students at the University of Texas at Arlington cheered when they heard the news. Riots flared in 110 cities; 75,000 federal troops patrolled American cities; 711 fires blazed in Washington, D.C., alone. <sup>1</sup>

I trust this short summation strikes a chord within all of us. I believe we know what is right, but doing what is right is difficult. My desire is that we would begin breaking down all barriers that somehow enable us to see ourselves as superior to any and all within the human condition and the body of Christ. It is the people of God, the Church of Jesus Christ that has led the charge and stood at the forefront of speaking to any and all injustice. It is always the people of God who must speak directly and primarily to this concern. Although the government seeks to encourage and enable, they often only frustrate and exasperate disharmony based on color, country, creed, or culture. We must not simply default to the government's involvement in injustice. With this said, there are four thoughts I wish us to consider in this study that will begin laying a foundation for treating all human life as sacred and equal.

### **The Storyline:**

God created everything, and for Him it has been created. By its very nature all of humanity is united. The division that exists within humanity is a consequence of the Fall. It is sin that empowers and enables injustice based on color, country, creed or culture. And it is only in the cross of Jesus Christ that true equality and justice is secured and realized.

### **The Problem:**

Sin is our problem and all injustice is a result of sin.

### **Questions:**

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the solidarity and sacredness of all life.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose justice against injustice based on color, country, creed or culture.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of living in the impartial justice of God.

### **Outline:**

- I. The creation of man speaks to our unity (Gen. 3:20; 9:19; Job 31:15; Prov. 22:2).

Human diversity in creation speaks to the richness of God's design.

“Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living” (Gen. 3:20).

“These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated” (Gen. 9:19).

“Did not He who made me in the womb make him, And the same one fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31:15).

“The rich and the poor have a common bond, The LORD is the maker of them all” (Prov. 22:2).

<sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup> nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; <sup>26</sup> and He made from one man [lit. “blood”] every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, <sup>27</sup> that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; <sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children'” (Acts 17:24-28).

According to the Bible, all humans on earth today are descended from Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, and before that from Adam and Eve (Genesis 1-11). But today we have many different groups, often called “races,” with what seem to be greatly differing features. The most obvious of these is skin color. Many see this as a reason to doubt the Bible's record of history. They believe that the various groups could have arisen only by evolving separately over tens of thousands of years. However, as we shall see, this does not follow from the biological evidence.

The Bible tells us how the population that descended from Noah's family had one language and by living in one place were disobeying God's command to “fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1, 11:4). God confused their language, causing a break-up of the population into smaller groups which scattered over the earth (Genesis 11:8-9). Modern genetics show how, following such a break-up of a population, variations in skin color, for example, can develop in only a few generations. There is good evidence that the various people groups we have today have *not* been separated for huge periods of time.<sup>2a</sup>

There is really only one race—the human race. The Bible teaches us that God has “made of one blood all nations of men” (Acts 17:26). Scripture distinguishes people by tribal or national groupings, not by skin color or physical appearance. Clearly, though, there are groups of people who have certain features (e.g., skin color) in common, which distinguish them from other groups. We prefer to call these “people

groups” rather than “races,” to avoid the evolutionary connotations associated with the word “race.”

All peoples can interbreed and produce fertile offspring. This shows that the biological differences between the “races” are not very great. In fact, the DNA differences are trivial. The DNA of any two people in the world would typically differ by just 0.2 percent.<sup>2b</sup> Of this, only 6 percent can be linked to racial categories; the rest is “within race” variation.

It is easy to think that since different groups of people have “yellow” skin, “red” skin, “black” skin, “white” skin, and “brown” skin, there must be many different skin pigments or colorings. And since different chemicals for coloring would mean a different genetic recipe or code in the hereditary blueprint in each people group, it appears to be a real problem. How could all those differences develop within a short time?

However, we all have the same coloring pigment in our skin—melanin. This is a dark-brownish pigment that is produced in different amounts in special cells in our skin. If we had *none* (as do people called albinos, who inherit a mutation-caused defect, and cannot produce melanin), then we would have a very white or pink skin coloring. If we produced a little melanin, we would be European white. If our skin produced a great deal of melanin, we would be a very dark black. And in between, of course, are all shades of brown. There are no other significant skin pigments.<sup>2d</sup> Whenever we speak of different “colors” we are referring to different shades of the one color, melanin.<sup>2</sup>

When Jay Seegert (President/Principal Lecturer for Creation Education Center) was present with us he spoke to this issue and commented with the following.

- When we think of “races” we typically think of distinctions related to traits such as skin color and eye shape, etc.
- There’s only 0.2% genetic difference between any two humans anywhere on Earth.
- Only 6% of the 0.2% difference (or 0.012%) is related to these “racial traits.”
- Therefore, “racially speaking” we are all 99.988% identical!

This diversity is seen in color and culture, natural talent and supernatural gifting. Therefore let us celebrate rather than divide over diversity.

II. The corruption of all speaks to our unity (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:23; 5:12-21).

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And **in sin my mother conceived me**” (Ps. 51:5).

<sup>22</sup>“even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; **for there is no distinction;** <sup>23</sup> **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**” (Rom. 3:22, 23).

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so **death spread to all men, because all sinned**—” (Rom. 5:12).

Human depravity in corruption speaks to a common deficiency. This corruption is found in the pervasive and inescapable human condition. Everyone, everywhere at all times is born as a descendent of Adam’s race. We are all equally marked by human depravity.

Therefore let us humble ourselves and cease our arrogant parading as if we because of color, country, creed, or culture are better than anyone else who is of a different color or culture than ourselves.

III. The cross of Christ speaks to our unity (Matt. 9:13; Gal. 3:28; Rev. 5:9).

Human delivery in the cross speaks to the indiscriminant nature of God’s activity.

“But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for **I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners**” (Matt. 9:13).

“For the Son of Man has come **to seek and to save that which was lost**” (Luke 19:10).

“And they \*sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and **purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation**” (Rev. 5:9).

<sup>24</sup> “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. <sup>26</sup> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus**” (Gal. 3:24-28).

**God saves only one kind of person regardless of color, country, creed or culture. God saves sinners. And when God saves sinners they are all the same in His eyes.** He sees us all regardless of color, country, creed or culture as righteous in His Son Jesus Christ.

IV. The commandment to love our enemies speaks to our unity.

Human deliberation in caring speaks to the solidarity of the entire human family (Exod. 23; 4, 5; Luke 6:27-37; Rom. 12:18-21). It is because of how we came to be, who we are in Adam and now who we are in Christ that we must treat everyone everywhere at all times with kindness. What we are about to read is deeply moving and perhaps disturbing. It takes all this “talk” about solidarity and the human condition and places it squarely on our lap. The love of God knows nothing of color, country, creed, or culture. It is boundless. Listen to the following passages and let us together struggle as to what this looks like for us as individuals within the context of this community of faith. Notice the progression and the inescapable conclusion.

A. The Law of Moses (Exod. 23:4, 5).

<sup>4</sup> "If you meet **your enemy's ox** or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. <sup>5</sup> If you see the donkey **of one who hates you** lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him" (Exod. 23:4, 5).

B. Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-37).

<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, **love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:43-48).

<sup>27</sup> "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup> Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. <sup>32</sup> If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. <sup>35</sup> **But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.** <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. <sup>37</sup> Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned" (Luke 6:27-37).

Although I believe there is a significant context for this communication, it is still impossible for me to simply write it off as non-consequential for us as a New Testament Church, the Church of Jesus Christ.

C. Paul's words to the Church in Rome (Rom. 12:18-21).

Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21, 22.

<sup>18</sup> "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. <sup>19</sup> Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> **'BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.'** <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:18-21).

“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; 22 For you will heap burning coals on his head, And the LORD will reward you” (Prov. 25:21).

Paul in capturing the thought of Proverbs 25 is also capturing the essence of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount. Proverbs 25 reflects the truth of Exod. 23:4, 5.

This is the most fundamental aspect of our Judeo-Christian ethic. It is that enormous capacity to treat those who are our enemies with respect and dignity. This is the one quality that marks us as followers of Jesus Christ. In every age those who were asked and invited to treat their enemies with kindness and to pray for those who would destroy them were often the persecuted and plundered. **What God calls us to He enables and empowers.** It is not only impossible for us to treat those who would seek our demise with kindness, but it is only possible because of who we are in Christ.

When St. Augustine wrote the concepts of Just War, the Roman empire was slowly being destroyed from within and from without. The concept of Just War is a guideline as to how we as nations engage those who would seek our demise. The idea of Churches going to War is foreign to the idea of Just War. Any time the Church of Jesus Christ has taken up the sword it has been to her everlasting disgrace and shame. We are to protect and celebrate life, not seek its demise. This does not negate us from supporting our nation as she seeks to protect and celebrate life in war and in civil law, but we are never to forget the fundamental principle of loving our enemies and doing good toward those who would spitefully use us.

I fully understand why we as a nation have a standing army and why we as individuals can enlist and support our national defense. And I understand why we as good citizens are to support our nation and those individuals who seek to protect our liberties that enable us to enjoy religious freedom. But let us also understand that we, in so far that it is in our power, must treat with kindness those who are our real enemies and pray for their continued need to be saved regardless as to color, country, creed, or culture. Let me draw this closer to home. I am not speaking of nations right now, I’m speaking of that person within your family, your community, the work place or church that you wish them ruin or whom you personally despise their presence. That is the person you are to show unmerited favor toward and are to be praying for. That is the immediate issue to this concern.

**Who do you identify as your enemy? Who do you think hates you? How do you treat them? What is your attitude and action toward them? Maybe it’s your spouse or parent or someone who is related by blood. Maybe some injustice was committed against you and you struggle to forgive them. In fact, this bitterness has you in its grip. Your deliverance will only happen in the cross.**

## Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Friend, facing our own prejudices and engrained arrogance can only be overcome by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This is what the Holy Spirit is working in us.
2. Think about how you and I view those who are of a different color, country, creed, or culture. My desire is that we would fight against such prejudices in our own life and in the life of our church and country.
3. Think about how we view our personal and national enemies. No matter how we attempt to justify our treatment of them, we must never stop trying to give the proverbial cup of water to our enemies and we must never stop praying for their salvation.
- 4.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/48\\_Racial\\_Harmony/1066\\_Class\\_Culture\\_and\\_Ethnic\\_Identity\\_in\\_Christ/Class, Culture and Ethnic Identity in Christ,](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/48_Racial_Harmony/1066_Class_Culture_and_Ethnic_Identity_in_Christ/Class,_Culture_and_Ethnic_Identity_in_Christ,) *Racial Harmony Sunday*, By John Piper, January 17, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/race-definition.html>

- a. Worldwide variations in mitochondrial DNA (the "Mitochondrial Eve" story) were claimed to show that all people today trace back to a single mother (living in a small population) 70,000 to 800,000 years ago. Recent findings on the rate of mitochondrial DNA mutations shorten this period drastically to put it within the biblical time-frame. See L. Lowe and S. Scherer, "Mitochondrial Eve: The Plot Thickens," *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, 1997, 12(11):422-423; C. Wieland, "A Shrinking Date for Eve," *CEN Technical Journal*, 1998, 12(1):1-3.
- b. J.C. Gutin, "End of the Rainbow," *Discover*, November 1994, pp. 71-75.
- c. However, people inhabiting the Indian subcontinent are mainly Caucasian and their skin color ranges from light brown to quite dark. Even within Europe, skin color ranges from very pale to brown.
- d. **Other substances can in minor ways affect skin shading**, such as the colored fibers of the protein elastin and the pigment carotene. However, once again we all share these same compounds, and the principles governing their inheritance are similar to those outlined here. Factors other than pigment in the skin may influence the shade perceived by the observer in subtle ways, such as the thickness of the overlying (clear) skin layers, the density and positioning of the blood capillary networks, etc. In fact, "melanin," which is produced by cells in the body called melanocytes, consists of two pigments, which also account for hair color. Eumelanin is very dark brown, pheomelanin is more reddish. People tan when sunlight stimulates eumelanin production. Redheads, who are often unable to develop a protective tan, have a high proportion of pheomelanin. They have probably inherited a defective gene which makes their pigment cells "unable to respond to normal signals that stimulate eumelanin production." See P. Cohen, "Redheads Come Out of the Shade," *New Scientist*, 1995, 147(1997):18.