

“Yes. Lament Over Our Broken Past”

Psalm 22:23-31

Romans 4:13-25

Mark 8:31-38

Let me remind each one of us that Lent began on Ash Wednesday, Wednesday, February 17. Lent is forty days of reflection and preparation before the celebration of Easter. By observing Lent, Christians focus on Jesus’ baptism, temptation in the wilderness and his earthly obedience. Lent is marked by lament, fasting, forgiveness, confession of sin and repentance. Today is the Second Sunday in Lent.

Jesus invites us to set our minds on facts not fiction. His perspective is so different than the shift in culture that has occurred to set our minds on fiction not facts. Nothing about Jesus’ baptism, forty days of temptation, his earthly obedience, suffering, crucifixion and resurrection from the dead is fiction. Neither is Jesus’ love for you, me and everyone. C. S. Lewis addresses this in *Mere Christianity* when he writes,

Christ says, “Give me all. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. I don’t want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you myself: my own will shall become yours.”¹

We often believe the fictitious claim that good works save us today and for eternity and wealth provides more security than faith in Jesus Christ. We often believe the fictitious claim that stopping the pain is the cure and natural inclination is more truthful than God’s

¹C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperOne, 2001), 196-197.

Word. The pseudo reality of fiction creates alternative facts, and we know better. Facts do not have alternatives.

Much of the strife today is caused by some people believing that white people are superior to all others. My friends, that is fiction. It is fact that humanity is one race, one blood. Those who believe the fictitious claim that white people are superior to others are Christian and non-Christian alike. It's a real problem when Christians deny fact.

Speaking to Christians who believe the lie of white supremacy, John M. Perkins writes, "The god of this world has blinded the eyes of Christians and the eyes of the Church so we cannot see the condition of our souls. But we can feel it; we can feel the gnawing in our souls."² The soul, my friends, is the sole arbiter of truth in our lives. It knows truth. Yes, every human being is created in the image of God, *the imago Dei*. All humans, Christians in particular, need to grieve our refusal to believe facts. We need to lament.

Psalm 22:23-31, Romans 4:13-25 and Mark 8:31-38 testify that the movement from individual to universal inclusion involves the discipline of lament.

Psalm 22:23-31 asserts lament is the most significant cry for help that any human can give. For when we cry out to God for help, we claim the fact that God is our help and refuge. Psalm 22:28 reads "For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations."

Romans 4:13-25 states that Jesus accomplished the redemptive, saving work for all humanity on the cross. Some have yet to accept that fact. It only requires faith.

Romans 4:20-24 reads,

No distrust made him [Abraham] waver concerning the promise of God, but he [Abraham] grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced

²John M. Perkins, *One Blood* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2018), 64.

that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his [Abraham's] faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his [Abraham's] sake alone, but for ours also.

Mark 8:31-38 focuses on the miracles of Christ. Yes, miracles were then, but they occur today as well. God uses the Church, which is made up of approximately 2.4 billion of people worldwide, to accomplish such an end. Heaven is not a reward. It is now, but not yet. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is a miracle unfolding every day. Life is not about us, but what God can do through us for the sake of others. It is a gift for which each one of us is asked by Jesus to give up something for the sake of another person. Picking up your cross and following Jesus is about loving the other person. Hard choices are always before us. Rejection and suffering are the facts for Christians, not the fictitious lies that life is a primrose path by placing one's faith in Jesus. Yes, there is a cost to be an authentic, factual follower of Jesus, but God is with us in it. Mark 8:38 reads, "Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the Holy Angels."³

Say no to the fiction of the socially constructed "myth of race." Again, John M. Perkins writes, "Each person, each individual offers a unique representation of God's image. We need to know each other, love each other, serve alongside each other to truly know the fulness of who God is."⁴ Let's refuse to misuse Scripture and miss Kingdom

³In the four paragraphs of textual analysis above, I have benefited from the thinking of David A. Vandermeer, Shanell T. Smith, Ann Hidalgo, O. C. Edwards Jr. and Lincoln E. Galloway in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume 2* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 44-45, 46-48, 48-50, 51-53 and 53-54.

⁴John M. Perkins, *One Blood*, 65.

and kindom opportunities. Let's no longer affirm shortsighted vision and misdirected missions. Let's practice remorse and lament.

We need to lament our refusal to obey Jesus' command to love others. On this Second Sunday in Lent be reminded that the socially constructed "myth of race" with its dominant thread of white supremacy denies our need to grieve over racism and practice remorse and lament. May this be our prayer:

God, move us to repent of hate, distrust and selfish greed. Open our eyes to You and Your Truth, shedding the callouses of fiction from our souls. Break down the walls that separate us from one another. Help us to love with Your love. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

My friends, say yes to lament over our broken past. Amen.

*This sermon was preached (Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Sunday, 28 February 2021
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