

“Yes. One Race, One Blood”

Psalm 25:1-10

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:9-15

Lent began on Ash Wednesday. 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.

Many of us grew up watching Mr. Rogers children’s programming. And, in 2019 Tom Hanks portrayed Mister Rogers in the movie *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* which furthered his reach to younger generations. In his life, Fred Rogers said many profound things. One of his most brilliant statements is “Life is deep and simple, and what our society gives us is shallow and complicated.”¹ Mister Rogers taps into the core of my sermon this morning. God created human, male and female. God created us equal in the image of God. Humanity is one race, one blood.

Beginning to see every human equally, not based on gender identity, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation or class, assists us to affirm a masterpiece that God has painted called life. It’s that deep and simple. In this regard, John M. Perkins writes,

...human beings are much more alike than different when it comes to our genetic makeup, and the term “race” suggests more genetic categories among groups of human beings than is supported by the scientific evidence...race as we know it today is mostly a social theory that was devised and refined over the centuries to

¹The source of this quotation is Fred Rogers, the Mister Rogers of children’s television, as cited in Christianity Today (3-6-00), 45.

serve the economic and religious goals of a majority culture, first in European territory, then later in America.²

The deep and simple truth of God's creative work over six days is this: the church has allowed the socially constructed "myth of race" to make life shallow and complicated as it continues to divide, cause chaos and isolate people from one another.

Psalm 25:1-10, 1 Peter 3:18-22 and Mark 1:9-15 testify that in the wilderness experiences of life, those broken and tempting times, the Holy Spirit is at work.

Psalm 25:1-10 asserts that the enemies of God, those people and ideas which torment our souls, will not defeat us. Psalm 25:2 and 4 reads "O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me...Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths."

1 Peter 3:18-22 states that we are to praise God in the trying, breaking and tempting times. 1 Peter 3:18 reads, "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God."

Mark 1:9-15 calls Christians to embrace that Jesus' baptism, temptation in the wilderness and earthly obedience give us insight into the rhythm of the Christian life. We are reminded that God calls us beloved, that Jesus conquered temptation and that Jesus' disciplined obedience give us focus to reflect, listen to God and step out in faithful living. The wilderness times in life give each one of us the opportunity to be attentive to the work of the Holy Spirit. Mark 1:14-15 reads, "Now after John [the Baptist] was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'"

²John M. Perkins, *One Blood* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2018), 46.

Jesus was tested as we are, but without sin. In every respect Jesus has lived the wilderness of lonely, broken and tempting times of life for humanity.³

Say no to the shallow and complicated life constructed by the socially constructed “myth of race.” Again, John M. Perkins writes,

We have allowed cultural understandings of race to infect our theology and how we view each other. “There is only the human race,” Dave Unander writes, “from every perspective: biological, historical, and God’s Word, the Bible. For the past five hundred years, Western society has been playing out a role in a drama written by the Enemy of our souls, the myth of the master race, and every act has been a tragedy. It’s time to change the script.” Changing the script will mean changing the way we read the Bible.⁴

It is true that ethnic, social, political, sexual and cultural prejudices have crept into our understandings and interpretations of the Bible.

On this First Sunday in Lent be reminded that the socially constructed “myth of race” thwarts our experience of God’s deep and simple creation of life. Know that God instructs, leads and teaches in trying times. Receive assurance that God works for good in all things. Affirm that Jesus ushered in the Kingdom and kindom of God bringing about God’s will on earth as it is in heaven now but not yet. Be confident that Jesus conquered personal and societal sin. We are one race, one blood. Amen.

*This sermon was preached (Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Sunday, 21 February 2021
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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), 28-30, 31-32, 33-34, 35-36 and 37-38.

⁴John M. Perkins, *One Blood*, 47. The Dave Unander citation within the Perkin’s citation is taken from Unander’s book *Shattering the Myth of Race* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2000), 2.