



Life Group Sermon Study Notes

“An Authentic Conversation on Racism and Injustice”

Sr. Ps. James Lowe and Ps. Ron Lewis – June 7, 2020

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What has surprised you the most about the quarantine experience?
- What books have you read in the last three months?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

In the middle of a health pandemic, we see nationwide protests against the historic injustice of blacks in America due to the recent killing of George Floyd at the hands of authority. This killing was an all too frequent reminder of how alive racism is today. The reality of racism isn't a narrative that is limited to a specific class, gender, or socio-economic group—it is felt to varying degrees by all. Technology doesn't allow us to deny racism but gives instantaneous evidence of a difference in the value placed on life based on skin tone. As believers, we must respond and act according to God's message for reconciliation. Pastor James and Pastor Ron Lewis' conversation helps us think through how the church fits into the narrative of racism in America. The framework for the discussion included thoughts from history, confession, repentance, and reconciliation.

History

Throughout America's history, justifications have been made for the dehumanization of blacks. From slavery to the disproportionate rate of the imprisonment of blacks, particularly males, who are given a substantially higher sentence for the same crime committed by a nonblack individual. Historically, you can look at the development of denominations and see that the main distinction is not theology, but color.

Confession

There has been progress, like that of the Civil Rights Movement, legally allowing blacks and whites opportunities to interact with one another physically. Yet racism adapts over time.

We must have authentic conversations and let the implications of the gospel grow us past a place of complicity. Conversations need to happen publicly and privately to speak out against the injustice to those who are unaware, indifferent, or supportive of racism.

Repentance

If we hope for lasting change, it starts with believers repenting—changing our mindset and, ultimately, our behavior. Corporately, we need to repent for the times the church has compromised or remained silent. Individually, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to examine our own hearts and expose any roots of racism. The gospel challenges us to respond in word and deed. Jesus could have looked at the fallen state of humanity and not intervened. But he condescended to us. He entered humanity as a Jew—a marginalized ethnicity. He became poor for our sake. He was tempted like us, yet without sin. He died under the oppressive rulership of the Roman empire. Through his resurrection, he claims power over the works of the devil, and that same power is available to believers.

What actions do we take? Be intentional in building relationships with those who don't look like you. Learn their experiences and together live out the story of Jesus. Pray to God about what other steps he would have you take to bring about systemic change.

Reconciliation

The church is guilty of wanting the picture of reconciliation without doing the work of reconciliation. Jesus is the source of reconciliation. His blood broke down the dividing wall of hostility to reconcile us to God and one another. He makes all of humanity one in him. In light of what Jesus has done, we are to bear the burdens of one another. There is no time like the present for the church to preach and live out reconciliation.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose one of the points below, and discuss how the lesson applies to our lives.

- Share where you are in understanding America's history of racism.
- How does the life of Jesus speak to how we should respond to our current reality?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as other requests you may have.

- Thank God for the gift of reconciliation and for the hope we have in Christ to effect change and bring change in a broken world.
- Ask God to help us process our emotions and respond in love and justice.
- Ask God for wisdom in discerning our personal responsibility to act against the racial divide in America.