

Culture Shock - Part 4

A Righteous Response To Racism & Riots

Proverbs 31:8-9, Various

Memory Verses: Galatians 3:28

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle):

Our world is shocking. It really is. But, we shouldn't be surprised. **Matthew 14** tells us that in these last days we will go through shocking times; wars, natural disasters, and civil unrest. And so, over the past three weeks we've been looking at some of the ways 2020 has tried to shock us and how we as Christians should respond. As we look at these extremely disturbing issues it is very important that we rely on the Word of God as our standard; our North Star to guide us to truth and above all... love. We will not bring calm to this cultural storm with arrogant rhetoric. We will not find a common ground by hating those we disagree with. We must try to approach each of these issues as Christ would; with love, empathy, and the truth of his Word. In **Matthew chapter 14** Jesus gives us three things to hold onto in these crazy times; don't be led astray, don't be alarmed, and don't be ashamed. When Covid comes and wrecks our jobs, schools, health, and our way of life... don't be led astray, don't be alarmed, and don't be ashamed. And, when racism leads to riots in our streets... don't be led astray, don't be alarmed, and don't be ashamed.

On May 25th police officers responded to a call about what appeared to be a drunk man who may have tried to use a counterfeit bill at a convenient store. Nothing ground breaking or earth shattering. But when the officers met George Floyd at his vehicle and tried to subdue him, all of that changed. After 8 minutes of restraint with a knee to the back of his neck, all while he pleaded, "I can't breathe," George Floyd was dead. On May 26th, in Minneapolis where Floyd died, the largest rioting our country has ever seen began. Rioting has now been reported in every major city in our country and most smaller cities. Over 1 Billion in damages, over 30 lives lost, and over 1000 police officers have been injured. And we still don't see an end in sight.

These are the facts of where we are right now. Now, what I don't want to do today is debate the specific issues concerning the George Floyd case, or any of the other similar cases. You may feel that George Floyd was in the wrong and that there were other contributing causes by which he met his demise, or you may feel that Officer Derek Chauvin was a racist who purposefully killed an innocent man. You are free to look at the evidence and come to your own conclusion.

What I do want to look at today is the fact that this one case

ignited a powder keg of feelings in our society concerning race. We see these riots, we see the anger, the pain, and we cannot deny that there are many people in our culture who feel oppressed and marginalized simply because their skin is a darker shade of melanin than the rest of ours.

Racism still exists in our world today. Racism still exists in our country, our culture, and in our community. And as Christians; as those who have been set free from hell, death, and sin... we should do everything we can to see all men and women, regardless of their race, set free from any form of injustice or discrimination. We must fight against racism and we must not tolerate racism in any form because that's what Jesus would do.

Galatians 3:28 says that we as humans are not divided by race, socioeconomic status, gender or any other external factor, but we are all one in Christ. As followers of Christ we must condemn racism.

But, in the same spirit we must also condemn lawlessness and violence in the form of riots. Even if those riots are meant to bring about an end to racism. Two wrongs don't make a right. **Romans 12:17 says, repay no one evil for evil.** This morning I want us to see that the way we in the church respond to racism and riots reveals to the world who our redeemer is. This morning I want us to recognize the truth of the matter; **Where Riots Fail, Jesus Succeeds. The End of Racism is Christ In Me.**

So, let's look at a couple of ways that we can respond to the riots in our streets and the racism in humanity with Christ in us.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first righteous way we can respond is probably the most important... **We Must Fight For The Equal Rights of All People More Than Our Own Rights.** **Ecclesiastes 3:16** tells us that the world we live in is unjust. Our systems can be unjust, our courts can be unjust, and wickedness seems to outweigh justice everywhere we look. But, one of the greatest injustices our world, and especially our nation, has seen is the horrible injustice of slavery. No one person should ever be owned by another person and, no group of people should be denied their personal freedom... a personal freedom given to us by our creator. The slavery of African American men and women in the early years of our country is perhaps the greatest abomination of our civilization. The scars of which we still bare and the shockwaves of which still see echoing through our culture. The first shockwaves; Jim Crow segregation and separate but equal laws, did nothing to ease the pain of slavery and revealed a deep seeded racism within our country which cannot be easily defeated. Even with these laws repealed there is no doubt that racism still exists in our society today; an ever present reminder of the evils of our past.

And so, as Christians, we have a responsibility to fight against racism, and fix what we can of our past mistakes. **Proverbs 31:8-9** tells us that we are to defend the rights of those in need and those who are

destitute. When we see racism in our culture, it is our duty as believers to speak out against it. When we find oppression, when we see discrimination... we must do something about it. Why? Because equal rights isn't an American ideal, it's a Biblical ideal. We must fight for equality as those how have gone before us have. Christian men fought to end slavery in America, through legislation and the emancipation proclamation, through the abolitionist movement and protests, and yes, through physical altercations in the civil war. Their grand-children and great grand children fought to end segregation in America, mostly through peaceful protest, legislation and the judicial process. And today we must continue that fight against racism. As **Proverbs 31:8-9** inspires us... **we must speak against racism, we must fight for anti-racist legislation, and we must defend the rights of all people.**

But ending racism will never be as easy as ending slavery or segregation. Racism is not a specific system that can be changed or abolished. It's not based on laws or government ideology. Rather racism is an issue of the heart; the human heart, and the heart can't be changed through legislation.

Now, I'll finish that thought in a minute, but first I want to touch on an issue that must be addressed. The idea of systemic racism. This is a buzzword in our culture which basically means there are laws and governmental structures which oppress people of color. Many believe that the racism we see in our culture is not just a matter of the human heart but is actually a matter of systems with racist protocols imbedded in them. And no doubt those systems do exist in the world, but do they still exist in America today? The only real way to prove that there is systemic racism in America today would be to point to a law or a policy within our local or federal government which promotes inequality between people of different races. Currently it would be very hard if not impossible for you to find one of those laws. There is currently no law or policy on the books, anywhere in America, that I know of, that proves that there is systemic racism anywhere in our country. I don't think they are there. But... but if they are, and it's possible we've missed something... then it is our duty as believers to fight against them.

No, I don't believe racism in America can be blamed on the system... because, as I was saying, it is an issue of the heart. Racism is a sin that stems from the most base of sins, pride. Racism like pride is the idea that I am more important than others, I am more deserving than others, and I am better than others. In this case, because my skin is a different color than theirs. Of course this is so evil it is obvious. How could we possibly discriminate simply based on the shade of melanin our skin is. Only the human heart could be so debase. And so you can see the problem; fighting a system, however hard it may seem, can be done, but how does one fight against the evils of the human heart? Look with

me to a passage we are all familiar with; **Philippians 2:3-5**. I think this is the absolute best course of action when fighting racism within our own hearts. First, count others more significant than yourself – regardless of color. How often do you encourage, lift up, or edify people of color? How do intentionally go about making people who look different than you feel special? It's a big deal. **If you want to do your part to end racism... show black lives that they matter.** Look to the interests of others more than your interests. What does that look like within the realm of race? How about putting yourself in the place of people of color. Why don't you try to see things from their perspective. And, I know this one will be hard, but when their interests do not infringe on the word of God perhaps their interests could become our interests. For example. One of the biggest issues in Danville over the past 5 years has been the issue of the confederate flag. Some of our black brothers and sisters wanted to remove the confederate flag from a government monument. To many in the area that flag stood for southern culture and pride, but to our black friends it stood for slavery and racism. Now since the flag has been removed, a hundred others have gone up in protest at private residences and businesses all over the area. Is that looking to the interest of others first? Probably not. Just a thought. You see... you don't just fight for the equal rights of others... you fight for their rights before you fight for your rights. This is the crux of the whole situation... racism will never end in our culture until we learn to put others before ourselves.

And lastly as verse 5 tells us, we can only humble ourselves, count others as more significant than ourselves, and seek the interests of others first when we have the mind of Christ. These values do not come naturally. In fact they are far from natural... they are against our nature. But when we allow Christ to become our Lord and let the Holy Spirit change our mind we begin to live counter to our nature. When we have the mind of Christ we have a mind that is equipped to fight the racism within the human heart. Get this... **racism cannot end in an individual person apart from a redeemed heart and a transformed mind in Christ**. Salvation in Christ is the only way to truly be free from the sin of racism. **Where Riots Fail, Jesus Succeeds. The End of Racism is Christ In Me.**

The second righteous way we can respond to riots and racism is... **We Must Recognize that Insurrection Does Not Reflect The Teachings of Jesus**. Why do we have riots? Because there is a boiling point at which, as one Minneapolis pastor stated, "differed dreams explode." There comes a time where words no longer move the process forward and where more drastic measures must be used. For example, you may disagree with the 2020 George Floyd Riots against police brutality but you probably are in favor of the Boston riots of 1773 when American colonists dumped 342 chests of tea into the harbor to protest unfair taxation. You may not know

this but those 342 chests of tea would be valued at more than 1 million dollars today; this was someone's private property. It's also interesting to note that while both George Washington and Martin Luther King both saw riots as the wrong course of action, they both understood that as long as justice continues to be denied, riots will continue to happen. King famously said - "true peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." In order for there to be peace there must be justice and until there is justice there will be no peace.

But the question remains; are riots in alignment with the Bible, and more importantly, the teachings of Jesus Christ? Well let's look to the times of Jesus for our answer. The Israelites were waiting for the Messiah, mainly because they saw him as a Moses like figure who would free the Israelites from the oppressive regime of Rome. Because of a misunderstanding of prophetic language reserved for the second coming of Christ, the Israelites were expecting a warrior king who would restore the kingdom of Israel by force. They were looking for a revolutionary who would riot and war against the authorities of the day.

Ultimately, they rejected Jesus as the messiah mainly because he was clearly not that guy. In **John 18:36** Jesus says, my servants aren't fighting for an earthly kingdom. Basically, my servants aren't going to fight against the Romans. Now, were the Romans oppressive? Yes? Was there a lack of justice for the Israelites? Yes. Were the conditions ripe for an uprising? Again, yes. And yet Jesus said... nope that's not how we are going to handle it. And when the Romans came to unjustly arrest him and eventually murder him Peter pulled out his sword in insurrection; in his mind it was time to get violent, but Jesus said in **Matthew 26:52**, Peter put away your sword. The greatest injustice of all time, the murder of Christ, was not met with riots or insurrection. Why? Cause that wasn't Jesus' way. Look in **Matthew 5:44** where Jesus suggested that if you want to fight your enemies you fight this way; by loving them and praying for them. Jesus wasn't a fighter and neither are his servants. In fact, Jesus was famous for his pacifism which is put on display in one of his most famous sayings in the sermon on the mount, **Matthew 5:38-39**.

The bottom line is this... Jesus was the most just being who ever lived, the most capable person of delivering justice through force there's ever been, and the Romans were one of the most oppressive regimes the Israelites had ever known and yet Jesus refrained from insurrection. **When it came time to riot, Jesus resisted**.

You may be wondering... are the BLM George Floyd Riots justified? I don't believe so because I don't believe that there is systemic police brutality nationwide. Are there some bad cops? Yes. Do our officers need better training so we have less of these incidents? Absolutely! But, when you look at the statistics you'll see that less than

1% of all police shootings last year involved a white police officer shooting an unarmed black man. I don't think we can say that this is systemic, and so no I don't believe that these riots have a justifiable cause, nor do I believe that the length and excessiveness of the riots can be defended. And, as I've already made clear, I do not think that a Christian should align themselves with a movement led by BLM which is an anti-Christian, anti-American organization which stands for almost everything we stand against.

But more so than all of that, I don't believe Jesus ever gives allowance for riots even if it is for a justified reason. So, even if there was systemic racism and police brutality, I can't in good conscience say that the Bible would allow you to loot, steal, burn, beat, and kill. We don't fight evil with evil.

And since I know some will just this as a rebuttal, yes Jesus did turn over the money lenders tables and whipped them out of the temple. But there are two facts here that show us a huge difference between this and the riots. One, Jesus was doing this in his father's house. He had authority to do it. And secondly, this was in relation to spiritual matters, not secular matters. Jesus was making it clear that when it came to defaming his Father in the name of religion, well he wasn't having that. If you truly want Jesus to get involved you don't have to oppress him, just disobey him.

The bottom line is that Jesus knew that physical insurrection was less powerful than spiritual transformation. A prime example of this is the fact that Rome was eventually overrun by the Jewish people, not by force but by conversion to Christianity. A revival swept through the land and 300 years after Jesus' Resurrection Christianity was made the official religion of the once pagan Roman empire. **Where Riots Fail, Jesus Succeeds. The End of Racism is Christ In Me.**

And the last righteous way we respond to racism and riots is... **We Must Learn to Love Those We Disagree With**. I don't know what emotions watching the riots evokes in your heart... but I know what emotions they evoke in mine... and it's not good. I too desire justice. I too want to see those who have destroyed working class people's small businesses go to jail. I want to see those who have attacked innocent people or police officers be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The fact that there was a group of people chanting we hope they die outside of the hospital where two police officers were fighting for their lives... makes my blood boil. I get it.

But we are Christians. We must suppress our emotions and seek Christ. We are called to a higher calling. The base nature of mankind is to seek revenge, to get justice the old fashioned way. But Christ calls us to something greater. Love. Look again at **Matthew 5:43-48**. If we only love the easy to love then we aren't really doing anything of value, but if we love those who are hard to love... then we are doing something that is rare and valuable and can make a difference. You may not like the rioters... I get it...

but have you prayed for them? Have you tried to empathize with them? Have you tried to place yourself in their shoes? You may not like athletes kneeling during the anthem, and so you have stopped watching the games.... but have you prayed for them? Have you heard their side of the story? You may not like BLM... and I get it. But have you ever had a conversation with someone who is black and asked them how they feel about the way they've been treated by the police? Have you ever tried to understand their pain? We are not called to judge them... we are called to love them and pray for them. **Vengeance is the Lord's. Finding value in others is our's.**

At some point you are going to feel the temptation to be pulled into the conflict; whether by counter rioting, or whether by inciting violence on facebook. Please resist. I believe that according to the Bible you should leave it to law enforcement and pray for those involved. We won't win them over through physical force... we can only win them over with the love of Christ. **Where Riots Fail, Jesus Succeeds. The End of Racism is Christ In Me**

Application

So what's the application today, what's the takeaway? Knowledge and action. Knowledge that there is racism in this world and we must act against it... because it is sin. We must understand that there may even be racism in us and if so, we must repent, seek forgiveness and be transformed. We must recognize that there are riots in this world because there is injustice in this world. We must fight injustice, but we must do it within biblical means. And, we must love rioters and pray for them, but we must refrain from getting down in the mud with them. Above all, we must place our faith in Christ. When Christ comes into our lives he changes our evil hearts and replaces them with love and empathy. **Where Riots Fail, Jesus Succeeds. The End of Racism is Christ In Me**

Conclusion

Rodney Floyd said of his brother George at George Floyd's funeral - "If George was told he would have to sacrifice his life to bring the world together, knowing him, I know he would have did it" It's a shame that it seems that instead of bringing the world together, George Floyd's death and the riots have divided us further apart. But that's not on George. That's too tall an order to put on anyone. No man could die, sacrificing their life, to bring the whole world together... unless that man is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did exactly that. He sacrificed his life. He willingly laid it down. He was murdered by the government, a true victim of police brutality. And he was buried and left for dead.

But the story doesn't end there. He rose again defeating death

and sin and gave us a way to eternal life and eventual world peace through trusting in him as our Lord by faith and repentance. Yes, It is a shame that George Floyd died... But through his death the world has revealed to us that we are in desperate need of a savior. Jesus is that savior that can bring about the end of racism, the end of riots, and the end of injustice once and for all... would you place your trust in him this morning. **Where Riots Fail, Jesus Succeeds. The End of Racism is Christ In Me**