

# “Kainos People” // Ephesians 2:11–22

## // *Ethnic Unity 2023 #1(y)*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

**Well, many of you heard I turned 50 this week.** Which is a new chapter...

- Up until now I’ve been **slowly raising the young adult age** at our church to whatever age I was—as in, up until last week our young pro’s dept up was 22-49. But 50 feels like it’s a bridge too far, though. So, **this is a new chapter.**
- And I did get **my AARP card in the mail**, which was depressing to me. So, if you want Denny’s...
- On a **serious note, many of you sent me cards and letters** of appreciation. Thank you: Veronica and I were deeply moved, and reminded of how grateful we are to serve here.
  - Some of the cards even had a **little bit of cash stuffed** in them, and, and I noticed a trend as I was opening them. A lot of the ones with cash in them were from **people of color**. So, not wanting to assume anything I asked Pastor Bryan if this was just a coincidence and he said, **“Nope. That’s just how we roll.** On the pastor’s birthday, you give him cash.” And I said, “Bryan, that’s why we need more ethnic diversity in our church!”

- Just kidding, but it does bring us to the **subject at hand**: ethnic diversity in the church, and why it’s a good thing.

***Ephesians 2 if you have your Bibles... Today we start a 3-week series on why the pursuit of ethnic unity is an important part of our mission here at Summit Church. I’m doing the first week; PB will do the next week; and then Bryan and I will do the final message together.***

*For a few years now we’ve said that **our goal as a church is 25x25**--as in, we’d like for our congregation to be 25% ethnically diverse by 2025.*

*We’ve said that because when you consider the demographic statistics of our region, if we achieve that goal that will mean we’re reaching all the types of people God has brought to our community and not just one slice of them. We believe God has sovereignly put us here to reach all kinds of people here, not just one class or one race of them. In fact, that’s part of our mission statement--we do whatever it takes to reach all people.*

*And I know for some of you, talking about this raises questions (well-intended questions), like*

- “Is this similar to some worldly quota strategy like we went through at my job”?

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<sup>1</sup> Works Consulted: Timothy Keller, [“Hope, Race and Power,”](#) sermon was preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on April 25, 2004; Tony Evans, Racial Reconciliation Summit, 2022, SBC (at Ed Litton’s Church); John Piper,

[“From Bloodlines to Bloodline,”](#) sermon on Eph. 2:11-16, Jan. 14, 2012; Albert Tate, “Therefore ...,” sermon on Eph. 2:10-18, Feb. 15, 2015; HB Charles, [“Tearing Down the Dividing Wall,”](#) ERLC Summit talk on Eph. 2:14-18, April 1, 2015. And others as noted throughout.

- And some of you ask: *Why are we even talking about this? If we just preach the gospel and teach the Bible, won't all these things just work themselves out?*"

And on one level, of course, I profoundly agree--we are definitely Gospel Above All people; our **primary, central calling** is to preach the gospel and make disciples.

But as I'll show you today, the gospel is a vertical reconciliation that leads to a horizontal transformation, and the Apostles are always clear in talking about both of them.

We're going to see that in how Paul lays out one of the greatest **gospel chapters in the Bible: Ephesians 2**. These opening 10 verses might be the clearest, most compact declaration of the gospel anywhere in the Bible.

Here's what Paul says in those breathtaking verses: **2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins... and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and (he has) raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That's all vertical.**

- We were hopelessly condemned in our sin when Jesus came down to earth on a rescue mission, to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves--he lived the life we did not live and then died the death we should have died.

- The gospel is not about a social program we live out, but a gift God gave to us.

But then, **vs. 11**, Paul immediately turns to the horizontal implications of that gospel rescue. **The key word is Therefore** (--THEREFORE--for Paul, this is always a transition word. In light of the breathtaking things I just told you about the gospel) **remember that at one time you were Gentiles...<sup>12</sup> separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, but...<sup>13</sup> he has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and vs. 16 and might reconcile us (to each other) both to God in one body through the cross...**

**Listen: Racial strife in Paul's churches was a real issue.**

- We think it's bad now; I would suggest it might have been worse then. The Jews in this church had a hard time worshipping with Gentiles, because for the first couple of thousand years, God's people had always been Jews.
- For **the first 2000 years**, if you wanted to know God, you became a Jew. You learned Hebrew and picked up Jewish customs. But **then Jesus launched his whole "whosoever will" program**, and a bunch of Gentiles started believing and joining the church.

And **so now**—you've got these new churches with Gentiles AND Jews together. And that sounds (sigh) beautiful, **but here's the reality**: these Gentiles had their own Gentile customs, their own Gentile fashions, their own Gentile music preferences; their own Gentile political perspectives.

- Pastor **Bryan** often says that we know multiculturalism was an issue in the early church simply by how much of Paul's letters talk about food.

- Food isn't an issue in a homogeneous church: You just eat your kosher meal and be happy. But when you have **Gentiles showing up** at the potluck, they start bringing in things like bacon jam and Grandma's pork rinds and squirrel soufflé casserole. And the Jews were like, "What is happening to our church?"
  - **Maybe you've read the Bible so long you've stopped noticing this**, but it is genuinely odd that **almost every letter Paul writes to the church has a section on "food problems."**
  - Think about it: of all the things to deal with in a congregation, you're going to write on food problems?
- But see, **that's what happens when you shove two cultures together**.
  - What one group eats offends another group.
  - And food is really important to us, so Paul has to deal with it.

Add to this the fact that for years **these Gentiles had been oppressing the Jews**. So now you've got representatives of the people who caused your family so much pain sitting right beside you in church with their hands lifted to the same God you worship.

So **this whole "one in Christ" thing sounds beautiful** to read 2,000 years later, but it was hard for them to live out.

What's interesting to me is that it seems like **Paul could have very easily avoided all these problems** simply by planting separate churches for the two groups.

- He could have gone over to the East side of Ephesus and planted the **First Baptist Jewish church**; and then gone over to the West and established the **First Baptist Gentile church** on that side.
- Everyone in each of those two churches would have liked the same music, eaten the same foods, shared the same basic political and moral viewpoints; small groups would have never gotten awkward.
- People could make jokes without the fear of being judged or misunderstood.

**And here's the other interesting thing: those homogenous congregations would probably have grown more quickly**, at least in the short run.

- **Anthropologists talk about the "homogeneity" principle**--the idea that groups grow more quickly when they are homogenous (similar) and everybody in the group looks and thinks and processes the world alike.
- **But Paul said, "No. God wants to show off his power by doing something the world can't do--something it craves but is unable to accomplish**, and that is bring these cultures together as one.
- **Gathering a large group of people** is no proof of God. No, Paul says, that happens every Saturday at the Roman Colosseum. The size of a crowd is no proof of God's power.
- No, God **shows off HIS power in the church** in a different way, and that is by bringing together into one body those who are divided in society.

**So, here's what I want to do today**. From this passage, I want to explain:

**1. Why the pursuit of ethnic unity is an important part of our mission.** **Why this** is not a distraction from that mission or caving to some worldly agenda.

- **Be clear**: I'm just going to use the Bible today. If what I say offends you, I'm going to ask you what part of what I'm saying doesn't come from the Bible. **I mean it.**
- I am very open to being corrected from the Bible. But if you **write me a letter**, you better have your Bible-face on, because I'm not going to give a rat's behind about your recycled political-pundit-talk-show-host perspectives.
- **We are Bible people here**, and that means, **as much as we can**, we don't want to be shaped by the agenda of the world--whether those are **FoxNews agendas** or **CNN agendas**; we want to be shaped by the agenda of THE BOOK.

- (Listen, *I will answer your email*. I'm just saying, **this Book** is what we're talking about.)
- And if you're the kind of person who is gonna hear this and just leave--cancel your church because this makes you uncomfortable--I'm going to suggest you don't understand church at all.
  - Church is **not supposed to be an inspirational weekend event** that caters to your religious preferences; it's a **family you join**; and being family sometimes means wrestling through hard conversations.
  - So, if your impulse in this is just to leave, you should ask yourself if you're actually part of the family of Jesus or just a religious consumer who likes to be entertained on the weekend.
- (Hey, I'm 50 now, so I can be old and cranky).

The second thing I want us to consider is: **2. What obstacles stand in our way (at Summit) of ethnic unity?**

- And I'm going to play the role of your aged, wise, 50-year-old pastor and point out a few things. **These should be fun.**
- And do notice I'm using the phrase "ethnic unity" because I think that's a more biblical goal than "diversity."
  - We're not simply after a diversity quota; our goal is **unity**, because that's what Paul is after.
  - The **point is not achieving** an ethnically diverse audience, or having the right color faces up here on stage, and then us all going back to our separate communities to live separate lives.
- **What we are after is what Paul talks** about here in **Ephesians 2**--one new man, one new body, that demonstrates the glory and power of Christ...

Alright, you with me?

## 1. Why the pursuit of ethnic unity is an important part of our mission

Let's go back again and actually re-read what Paul says: <sup>2:11</sup>

Therefore (he says to this congregation) **remember that at one time you were Gentiles...** ('Gentiles' just means "non-Jews," outsiders) <sup>12</sup> **separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.** (In the Old Testament, those two phrases meant the same thing. To be "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" was to be "separated from Christ." When you came to know God, you joined Israel). **And so, Paul said, you Gentile Christians, were)** **...foreigners** to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...

- **Around the Jewish Temple** was a literal wall. It was about 10-feet high, made of thick stone, with a sign on it that read, and I quote: 'ANY GENTILE ENTERING BEYOND THIS WALL WILL HAVE ONLY HIMSELF TO BLAME FOR HIS ENSUING DEATH.' They weren't too good at the concept of the **seeker service yet.**
- **This wall separated,** in the Jewish mind, the good from the bad, the clean from the unclean, the safe from the unsafe, the holy from the unholy.

**Now, we might be politically correct enough** now to not put up walls like this, but in every church we still have "dividing walls"? Walls that, in our minds, separate the right kinds of people from the wrong ones; the good from the bad; the safe from the unsafe.

- Those could be **ethnic walls**; **educational walls**; **political party affiliation walls**; **net worth walls**; how **morally -clean-your-past-has-been walls**-- anything that puts people into categories, gives you a group to belong to, and makes you feel superior.

**Christ tore down all those dividing walls**, Paul says, by showing that there is **only one true category of people**: sinners.

- **Critical race theory is wrong**--we're not primarily members of a social group, we're primarily people made in the image of God. All of us, regardless of race, ethnicity, background or class, have a common problem: sin. We were all on the **outside, whether Jew, Gentile, black, white, Asian, Hispanic, or something in between.**
- In God's eyes, *there are no "good people" and "bad people"; "winners and losers"; "strong people" and "oppressed people;" "people who have it together" and "dysfunctional people."*
- *There are only bad, dead, sin-sick rebels; children of Satan, sons and daughters of disobedience, without God and without hope in this world.*

**And Jesus' blood, Paul says** (vs. 14) cleansed us all alike. And that tore down this wall!

- *BTW, think of how revolutionary this was!* At the **time Paul wrote these words**, that 10-foot wall in the Temple was still there. And Paul says, *"That wall no longer exists. In Christ, those distinctions are no longer there."*
- **Think about this, it's pretty awesome:** When Christ died, the veil in front of the Holy of Holies that separated man from God was torn in two. And now, Paul says, that tears down the wall separating the various groups in society.
- **Ethnic unity is not the gospel;** it is an essential implication of the gospel.

Furthermore, Jesus' death and resurrection, Paul says, **Vs. 15, created a whole new race of humanity.**

- **The word for "new" there in vs 15**, in Greek, is "**KAINOS.**"  
Everybody say it with me: KAINOS.

- Kaions doesn't just mean "new" as in "most recent," as in "this is my new car; I traded in my 2015 Toyota Camry for a 2023," but "new" as in an entirely different KIND of man; a whole new type.
- **In other words, in his resurrection Jesus created a whole new "race" of people, so to speak.**
  - That **doesn't erase our previous ethnicity** or make it unimportant. **No**, God made the various cultures as a display of his glory.
  - **Revelation 22 says that we will bring the best** of our individual cultures into heaven as a display of God's glory... us **West Virginians** will bring our folk music and our John Denver songs and our fighting spirit and our Waffle Houses into heaven for everyone to enjoy along with us.

So, no, **this new race doesn't erase our previous ethnicities;** it just gives us a common, united identity that is more important than our ethnicities.

**Pastor Thabiti Anyabwile**, a Black pastor in Washington, DC, talks about the concept of the "3<sup>rd</sup> race." He says, Let your **first race represent...** Whatever you're not is the second race...3<sup>rd</sup> race is...

**Thabiti says,** "When I become a Christian, he says, it's not that my 1<sup>st</sup> race disappears, but my 3<sup>rd</sup> race—who I am in Jesus, becomes more important to me than my 1<sup>st</sup> race.

*I no longer find my fundamental identity in being a black man let it fill me with an ethnic pride that divides me from others.*

*In fact, I can even lay that identity aside when I need to. I feel more commonality with my brothers and sisters in Christ than I do even with those from my own ethnic class."*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> My paraphrase, based off a talk Pastor Thabiti gave at "Together for the Gospel."

That's how all Christians of all ethnicities are supposed to be. **And that creates peace. In Jesus, there is only one kind of sinner: dead; only one type of believer: alive in Christ, fully adopted into God's family, partakers of God's glorious inheritance. **The end. Hallelujah. Amen somebody.****

Paul then goes on in chapter 3 to make this amazing statement: This supernatural union of Jews and Gentiles together in one body was so... **...God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. (3:10)**

- **Question: HOW** will God's wisdom be made known to the skeptical world? By how good and convincing the preaching is? By the winsome apologetics?
- "I know, I know," you say: it will be through the music. People will feel God moving in the music and become convinced God is here. Right? No. Maybe by how many people are coming?
- **I know:** It will be by our dramatic acts of service and love?

**These are all good.** But what makes the rulers and authorities take notice is the unity in the body of Christ. That's what Paul says.

- **Historian Rodney Stark**, in his book *The Rise of Christianity*, said that one of the primary things that made the early church grow so quickly was that it was the only place in the Roman Empire where the different ethnicities and classes got along. The Romans had created these metropolitan cities that were unlike anything that had come before, and for the first time in history, people from wildly different backgrounds were thrust next to each other, and that led to all kinds of cultural clashes. On top of that, Roman society was very hierarchical, so you had slaves and merchants and aristocrats all in close proximity, and that led to a lot of class warfare. The early churches were the only place where those groups came together as one and called each other brother and sister, and that was extremely attractive, because it demonstrated

something we all know instinctively--that humanity shares a common problem, common identity, and common hope.

- This got the world's attention, because **the gospel was accomplishing something that Rome**, for all its power and might, had been unable to do.

So, that's **why I say ethnic unity is an important part of our mission and not a distraction** from it;

- **Ethnic unity is not the gospel**, but it's a validation of our gospel.
- This vision we have for our church comes right out of Eph 2.
- So, **the answer to "why are we focusing on this"** is "because the Bible does."

Now, **before I go on** to what some of our obstacles will be, could we stop for a minute and just **celebrate how far God has brought us in this?** I don't want to imply that we're done, or pat ourselves on the back, because I know where we are is still frustrating for some of you, but I think it's important to stop and celebrate what God has done.

- **As I said earlier, this isn't about a quota.** But it is **significant that right at 20%** of our staff--46 people, to be exact, are POC
  - and those serving the senior director levels have doubled to **about 25%**;
  - **3 of our 5 lay DE's are POC** (DE's are the ones who make a lot of our big decisions here);
  - more than **half our campus pastors are POC**,
  - and **over a third of this year's class of young leaders** we are training for ministry class are POC.
- And here's another: **40% of our college students on City Project this summer** are minorities; **most from NCCU** where we've always prayed to have ministry but haven't been able to until very recently.
- This **moves us closer to that 25% goal by 2025.** And **that number is not arbitrary**, btw, because 20% is when they say minorities start to feel like their voice is heard, that they're not just guests at a "white church," that their influence is felt and first time guests

who are minorities don't feel out of place. And that moves us closer to our goal of reaching ALL people in the Triangle, and not just one kind.

**Most importantly**, these staff and leaders are learning to love one another, trust each other, to give each other the BOD, and strive for unity together.

So, **we have more work to do ahead of us**, but I think it's important that we **celebrate God's work among us**. He who began a good work has promised to complete it. AMEN?

**Now--let me turn to the work ahead and identify** what's going to make it challenging. **Everybody ready?**

## 2. What obstacles stand in our way (at Summit) of ethnic unity?

First of all, **1. Satan**

- The **next several chapters of Ephesians** are all about how the demonic powers aligned against the church. Satan **hates this kind of unity**, especially in the church. So, **you can be sure** he's going to oppose it.
- **Let me tell you how he might do this to you:**
  - He's going to **suggest stuff** to you this week about it being too hard.
  - He's going to **whisper into some of your ears this week** that this is all about politics even though I have said literally nothing about that.
- So, be **aware who your enemy is** in this and resist that Satanic voice.

## 2. Pride

- **Whenever we talk about this**, what makes it difficult is it cuts all of us down at the core of our pride
  - Let me quote **John Piper here**: "Racial tensions are rife with pride—the pride of white supremacy, the pride of black power, the pride of intellectual analysis, the pride of anti-intellectual scorn, the pride of loud verbal attack, and the pride of despising silence, the pride that feels secure, and the pride that masks fear. Where pride holds sway, there is no hope for the kind of listening and patience and understanding and openness to correction that mature relationships require."
  - **Or, to say it much more simply, let me quote Tony Evans**: We have skin issues because we have sin issues.
  - So, **beware where your own personal pride** kicks into gear. Church unity, Paul says, is built only on humility.

## 3. Preference

- Our **cultural preferences are not wrong. We all have them**. It's just sometimes for the sake of unity, we set them aside to help someone else feel more comfortable.
- I told you earlier this year that I am **sometimes blown away** by the different kinds of people I can look around and see on a Sunday morning. **We have some of you raised *Southern Baptist*, and they sing boisterously. When it's time for the message, they take out their *notebook*. Shout a *punctuated Amen* occasionally. *Every SB church has the random Amen* guy (*DEACON's MEETING*)... That's what they say to me in sermons. Single, staccato, **amen!****
- *That's different from some of our **Black members**—some of whom talk back to me in full sentences with nouns and verb clauses and questions I wonder if I'm supposed to answer.*
- *I contrast that with our **Korean members**, who are some of my favorite worshippers. I was watching a row of them one time at BCC, and they weren't singing, but shouting the worship songs...*

but then they say NOTHING to me during the sermon. To the point that I asked them if something was wrong?...

- **We have a Summit member who serves as a missionary in TOKYO. And he said, if you look at the faces of Japanese believers in worship, they are extremely expressive, but everything they do is a whisper. When he asked them why, they said, "We want to express our hearts to God by our emotions, but we also want not distract others from doing the same."**
- **Now contrast that with some of our members who stretch before they come into church cause if you ain't sweatin'; you ain't praising...**
- And then you got a **bunch of y'all in our church** who just don't know what you are doing. I love how Tim Hawkins describes the progression.
  - Elbow flap (chicken wing)/ hold the TV set, big screen; Mime in a box. Village people, Rocky, touchdown.
  - We have charismatics who are washing heavens windows and Koreans trying to give Jesus a high-5
  - **MW:** "My arms are tired. Is that usual for a pagan who becomes a Christian?"
- **And, btw, I haven't even brought up our Hispanic brothers and sisters: I go down there sometimes when our services are over and, guys, they are not through with the 1st song set yet. And I'm torn between my urge to worship and to dance along with the beat—their music inexplicably makes your hips start moving and my wife says, "Cut it out. You keep those hips in place."**

I asked you when I went through that list: **"Now, which one of those is God's favorite style of worship?"** AMEN

**So, let me say this:** In order to be a part of a multi-ethnic of church, you have to be willing to be uncomfortable sometimes with people who are not doing things your way. Paul says that in the church we just put the needs and interests of others before our own.

- **Vance Pitman:** "The way to **know you are part of a truly multi-ethnic church** is that you often feel uncomfortable." Many of us, he says, say we **want a multi-cultural church** but we really only want a multi-colored one, with a bunch of people with different colored faces all doing things our way.
- **People sometimes say to me,** "Well, I don't like it when we do that in worship." And I want to say, "**Well, maybe this whole thing is not about what you like.** If you want to be somewhere where it's all about you, go pay **\$800 for a night at the Ritz-Carlton** where it will be all, entirely, exclusively about you. But this church is about the glory of Jesus and the urgency of the Great Commission, and so when you come here, that's what you should expect it to be about."

#### 4. Naivete

- One of the things that my **friends of color tell me** is that many of us in the majority culture don't think we have a culture. **Other people have cultures;** ours is the standard against which all others are measured. Or sometimes we refer to other people as having ethnicities. **ILLUS. ETHNIC MOMENT**
- **BOTTOM LINE: we think that other people have cultural particularities;** we don't--ours is the standard by which others are judged.
- I hate to burst your bubble, but **white, Caucasian** is an **ethnicity** and has its **own cultural perspective.** We have our own, particular views of conflict resolution, romance, parenting and child-rearing; money; dress; music; time; respectfulness; family and so many other things.
- There are other perspectives on these things. **And that's OK.**
- **Some cultural perspectives are just different.** Janetta Oni, one of our black, female leaders here told me, "One of the things that is weird about being with a bunch of white people is that everyone assumes you know what a casserole is and that that's what you bring to someone when you are making a meal for them. The first time someone brought me a casserole I was like, "What is this



conglomeration of foods piled together and why are you bringing it to me?"

- **Some perspectives are different.**
- **Some cultural perspectives are wrong.** Each culture has weaknesses and blindspots that make them particularly susceptible to some errors..
- **Some cultural perspectives are right.** Just like each of our cultural histories have made us blind to certain things; it's also made us MORE aware of certain aspects of God's truth.
- So, some cultural perspectives are different; some are wrong; and some are right. The **least we can do is work hard** to understand the cultural perspectives we all bring into this place.

## 5. Poor listening skills

For a lot of us, when it comes to **discussions like these**, our poor listening skills really begin to display themselves.

- **James in the Bible tells us** that we should be "quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger," and if there were ever a place for us to apply this verse, it is in this area.
- **Yes, there's a place for you to speak.** "Be slow to speak" doesn't mean "never speak," it just means that you listen far more than you talk.

**So, that raises these questions.** When it comes to **talking about this stuff:**

- Do you **seek to understand** more than you seek to be understood? (That's what James is telling you to do.)
- Another way of saying that: **Can you repeat someone's position back to them in a way they would agree with and say that you really understood them?**
  - I got really **racially offended** one time... **Young woman at Hardee's.** "She needs to understand that not every white person thinks of her that way. You need to understand that she

reacts that way because at some point she was treated that way. And when you both understand that, you'll probably be able to move more toward peace."

- **Here's the question: What if we had a church** where people **listened to each other like that--**where we **gave each other the benefit** of the doubt in these situations?
- **The famous psychologist M. Scott Peck**, who became a Christian later in life, famously said, **To listen to someone is to love them.**
- **And before** you come back at them with a solution, or a reason why their pain is illegitimate, to at least validate it and sit with them in it. That's what love is. (Some of us aren't good at that. I'm not.)
- *I like what Albert Tate, a Black pastor, said about this, "It's hard for me to love when I'm so busy trying to defend myself."*

**We don't want to be a church that focuses so much** on this relationship (vertical) that we neglect the pain of each other here (horizontal).

Paul tells us the **gospel compels us to bear each other's** burdens, and that starts with listening to each other.

## 6. Ignorance of our history

**Many of us in the majority culture** have proven woefully ignorant of how the racial situation in our country came to be.

- We **barely understand what things like the Jim Crow laws** were or what kind of societal disparities they created.
- Out of love for our neighbors, some of us should just read a book. Or take a tour of a civil rights museum on one of your vacations; or read, for example, *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson or a book on a reading list we'll make available to you this week. It's great summer reading.

- **I DON'T mean we embrace revisionist history** like the 1619 project or adopt CRT approaches to politics or education--those approaches are often as worldly and problematic as what they are trying to correct. That's not what I'm suggesting here.
- But **don't let the existence of other revisionist histories** keep you from reading things that challenge your own revisionist view of history, which is what a lot of us learned growing up.

**Of all people, Christians should be willing to embrace the truth,** and

- It shouldn't surprise us to learn that many of our ancestors were depraved sinners. That's what our gospel teaches us! We should acknowledge the truth when it comes to things like the history of the church.
- For example, **just about every black denomination in our country** (AME Zionists, the National Baptist Convention, Christian Methodist Episcopal, etc) was started because white people refused to allow blacks in church, or in places of influence in church.
- **Many of Dr. King's biggest opponents** in trying to get Jim Crow laws abolished were Baptist, Presbyterian and Anglican pastors.
- The **whole Southern Baptist Convention was started** in 1845 because Baptists then wanted the ability to appoint slaveholders as pastors and missionaries. You don't think that affects the present?
- We're **suffering today because of the sins of our ancestors.** God visits the sins to the 3rd and 4th generation.

Let me quote my friend **David Platt**: **Are we responsible for the sins of previous generations?** No. But "Are we responsible for knowing the history of racism in America, for understanding how it is enshrined in the places around me, for recognizing how it influences people in my country, and for making sure that I don't repeat or preserve the harmful effects of the past, especially in the church? Yes, we are.

<sup>3</sup> David Platt, *Don't Hold Back*, 28

David says, "And for most of my life, I haven't stewarded this responsibility as I should."<sup>3</sup>

**To listen to someone is to love them.** And let me add: **Listening doesn't mean that all perspectives are equally right.** That's insane.

- **All cultures, all of them, have wrong assumptions** and moral blindspots, and one of the values of being in relationship is you can point out those blindspots.
- **Some of my cultural assumptions** may make me blind to injustices happening around me that I've grown comfortable with because they don't affect me directly. Others should point those out to me.
- **On the other side**, we should never be ok with the wickedness of killing unborn life in the womb, or naive to the destructiveness of the sexual revolution in our society. **The loss of religious liberties** in this country or the **killing of unborn life** are not only "white evangelical concerns."
- We **need to be willing to listen to each other** and stand against unrighteousness wherever we see it, whether or not those concerns are usually associated with "our tribe."
- As we've said, in here, we don't **primarily identify with the elephant** or the **donkey**, but with the **Lamb--and he's on the side of 'all things justice'.**

**So, there we have it. 6 obstacles** to being the kind of church Paul calls for in Eph 2–3.

- Y'all, is there any **wonder** our society can't accomplish this? **Our society wants this--but they can't achieve it.**

But, as Paul explains in Ephesians, what the **law is unable to accomplish**, the **power of new life accomplishes** in the gospel.

- **It does so by giving us a new identity. No longer am I primarily a white man or black man or hispanic man;** I am a son of Jesus. And we share more in common in Christ than we differ in culture.
  - I'm still white, you're still black or Hispanic or Asian, but in Christ we are **"new men and women,"** we're *kainos* people.
- The gospel also motivates us to **lay down our preferences for others**
  - **Think about what Jesus had to lay aside** when he left heaven to come here. **Talk about culture shock?** Think about what he was eating and listening to in heaven and then he has to come down this trash down here!
  - **Paul says,** "If Jesus did that for you, can you not do that now for others?"
  - Can't you see the irony of coming to church worship a Savior who **gave up all his rights** for us, while we simultaneously insist that everyone else around us worship that Savior *the way that we prefer?* Can you think of a **greater hypocrisy?**

## VAMP

**SUMMIT—I want us to be committed to this. Let me say: I want to applaud those** of you who are.

- Especially those who are not part of the majority culture who have come to this church and chosen to make it your home. I know it's **not been easy for you.** You came here and often felt alone and misunderstood. It would be so much easier for you to go to a church where everyone looks like you and understands you. I get that.
- I want to **commend you and thank you** for coming to be a part of *this* church. YOU ARE A GIFT TO US in the majority culture.
- And, I believe that what you are doing glorifies Jesus and really serves the Great Commission. Thank you. **Please don't give up.** Be patient with us in the majority culture. We need you.

**And I want to challenge all of you to move beyond mere agreement (nodding your head) on this to actual engagement with it.** And that's what this series is about. And that's why we've given you important **discussion tools** for your small groups this week.

So, could we **PRAY** about that together? We're gonna **need the help of the HS** as we do this.

BOW YOUR HEADS.

- Will you **take into this series** a humble heart and open mind? (And will you commit to taking this to our small groups and getting into this this week?)