

Can Blacks and Whites Live Together in Peace?

Rich Nathan and Dr. Charles Montgomery

September 24 & 25, 2016

Different Together

Ephesians 2:13-17; Galatians 2:11-22

RICH

I find it incredibly providential that the weekend we scheduled for the message “Can Blacks and Whites Live Together in Peace?” falls on a week when a Tulsa police officer has been indicted for manslaughter in the killing of an African-American man.

Providence

Charlotte has erupted in protests over the last several nights because of another shooting. And here in Columbus, Ohio, 13-year old Tyre King, an African-American boy, apparently pulled out a BB gun that looked like a real gun. Who manufactures these things and then sells them to children? 13-year old Tyre King was killed.

One doesn't need a PhD in History to know the basic outline of American racial history. African-Americans don't have a glorious story of their ancestors coming through Ellis Island seeking a better life for themselves and their children. Or the older story of America, people seeking religious liberty for themselves. African-Americans are the only group who came to our continent unwillingly and in chains.

It doesn't take a PhD in History to be aware of this story of 250 years of slavery followed by the briefest moment of hope called Reconstruction that was crushed by another 100 years of Jim Crow segregation, the denial of educational access, the denial of voting rights. “Separate but equal” at every turn. Lynchings and cross-burnings. It doesn't take a PhD in History to learn about why America's housing patterns are the way they are – because of red-lining and restrictive covenant and covert segregation.

It doesn't take a PhD in History to give lie to the statement made by a campaign operative in our own state of Ohio who said just this week that racism is something President Obama invented that never existed before his presidency.

During this providential moment with so much division in our country, Dr. Charles Montgomery and I are going to share the pulpit together as we ask the question, “Can Blacks and Whites Live Together in Peace?”

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we feel so inadequate to even begin the journey of answering the question: can blacks and whites live together in peace? With so much hurt, with so much history, so much hatred and hysteria, what can we hope for through a church – even a church the size of Vineyard Columbus? Yet it was you, O Lord, who looked at the church and called us salt and light. You said that we were the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We know, Lord, that just a tiny drop of salt will prevent the world from decay and just a little bit of light will drive darkness out of a room. It's because of what you said, Lord, that we believe that by your power we can bring healing. We pray for the church in Charlotte and the church in Tulsa and the church in Columbus. May we bring healing and salt and light to our city. Grace us as we speak and grace us as we listen. In Jesus' name, Amen.

What is God's purpose for the world? Why are we talking about trying to create the conditions for racial reconciliation between blacks and whites in this church? Why have we spent so much time and energy and money on this journey of building a multi-ethnic church? It is not because it is politically-correct or because racial reconciliation is the flavor of the month, a passing fad. Why do we pursue building a multi-ethnic church? It's not because it's easy or a quick way to grow your church. It's difficult. It's slow. It's way easier to grow a mono-racial church than a multi-ethnic church.

So, why? Why pursue racial reconciliation? Why a multi-ethnic church? Because of the Bible. Because if I gave you a Bible and sat you down on a desert island and asked you the question, "What should the church look like? What is God's purpose for the church?"

Purpose

The purpose of God is found in Ephesians, chapter 2:

Ephesians 2:15

..... His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,

God's purpose was to bring together what is divided. Now, it doesn't take a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to see how divided the world is. Or to pursue this goal of a new united humanity. The attempt to create a new humanity that heals all of our divisions has been repeatedly attempted in human history, but the way it has been attempted is by cultural domination, by destroying every remnant of another culture and by absorbing that culture into the dominant culture. The obvious example here in the US is one way we approached Native Americans for centuries. Native American children were not allowed to speak their native language or wear native dress or participate in Native customs. Everything was Americanized.

So when human beings try to create a new humanity, almost always by cultural domination. But God achieves his purpose of creating a new humanity in a totally different way. God doesn't erase our differences, he preserves our diversity. What do you think the Kingdom of God will be like? The unity and diversity thing is part and parcel of the Kingdom Jesus came to bring.

Here's what we read in:

Revelation 7:9

⁹After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Let me put this in non-religious language. What do you think we'll be eating in the Kingdom of God? I know what we'll be eating – bagels and lox and New York style pizza because that's the best. But maybe the Kingdom we will also eat gyros from Greece and cassavas and plantains from Ghana and Injera or flat bread from Ethiopia and wine from France and piroshkies from Russia and chicken tikka masala from India and lobster from Maine and chocolate from Belgium and samosa from the Middle East and tamales from Mexico. What do you think the Kingdom of God is like?

What do you think people will be wearing on their heads? Maybe a fez from Morocco or a backward-turned New York Yankees baseball cap or a sombrero. What language will we hear? Just English? No, we'll hear Swahili from Kenya, Yoruba from Nigeria, Arabic from Egypt, Hindi from India, Spanish, French, 10,000 other languages all praising God with musical instruments from all over the world! And we'll be able to understand each other and Amen each other. That's God's purpose.

One new humanity that preserves our diversity. Different Together.

Now our personal stories need to be woven into God's great purpose of healing all the divisions that human sinfulness has created. How did I personally get caught up in pursuing the building of a multi-ethnic church?

Personal Journey

For most of my life, my closest relationships looked like me. We moved here to Columbus for law school and then joined a church that was almost entirely white. In 1988, I had a dream. Actually it was a series of dreams over the course of one evening. I was up front preaching in our church. I had just become our church's first senior pastor. In the dream, while I was preaching, I looked out and the church was incredibly racially diverse. I woke up from the dream really excited. I thought, "Wow, the faces that I looked at were so different than the faces that I see every week in front of me." I

feel back asleep. I had a dream the second time. Then I fell asleep and had the dream a third time and after the third time I felt the Lord speaking to me. He said, “Rich, this is going to be your destiny. This is what I’m going to do in the church.”

Through the 90’s I prayed over that dream many, many times. “Lord, when will you make our church racially diverse? How will you do that? There are these catalytic moments that change our lives.

Catalytic Moments

You know what a catalyst is in Chemistry, don’t you? Catalysts speed up the chemical reaction by loosening chemical bonds. Catalytic events open us up to change, to consider things from a different perspective. The prophetic dreams were a catalytic moment.

In 2001, I took a sabbatical. I spent the sabbatical just visiting African-American churches. I learned what it felt like to be virtually the only person in a room of my own race. Everyone walks into a room and asks themselves if there’s anyone else who looks like me here? I wondered if the people there wanted me at their church. And when we held hands, I wondered if the person who was holding my hand wanted to hold my hand. Or if I was making them feel uncomfortable. It was a catalytic moment. I began to walk in the shoes of people of color who were walking into Vineyard in those days and looking around and saying, “There’s not many people who look like me here.” Do Vineyard people want me here? Am I making them uncomfortable?

We began to do pulpit exchanges and joint staff meetings with African-American churches in our community so that we could begin to get exposed to a different voice, a different perspective. About 14 years ago, Bishop Timothy Clarke and I formed a Large Church Round Table for our city where we gathered pastors across denominational lines - African-Americans and whites.

As our group began to grow, we had a two-day meeting with a facilitator to discuss the subject of race. And during that two-day meeting there was another catalytic moment. A pastor challenged Bishop Timothy Clarke on Bishop Clarke’s assertion of the continuing, lingering effects on racism in our society.

Bishop Clarke looked at him and he said, “Let me ask the white pastors who are sitting in this room, how many of you have taught your sons what to do with their hands when they are driving and they are pulled over by the police?” The white pastors all looked at one another and we said, “No, we’ve never done that.”

He said, “Let me ask the brothers. How many of you brothers have taught your sons what to do with their hands when they are pulled over by the police?” Everyone raised their hand.

He asked three or four more really pointed questions. “How many of your white pastors have done this? How many of you brothers have done that?” In every case, it was 0% and 100%, 0% and 100%, 0% and 100%. Then fixing his eyes on me, Bishop Clarke said, “Rich, every day when you look in the mirror you see a man. Every day when I look in the mirror, I see a black man. You never think about race. I think about race every day of my life because I’m forced to.”

It was a prophetic word that was like a spear right through my soul. It was a catalytic moment.

With my dear friend, Kwesi Kambon who is on our Church Council and is one of our pastors, I then led an African-American men’s group here at our church. For a couple of years, I got to be the only white man in a group of about two dozen other men. Again, I learned to walk in the shoes of those who always are the only person who looks like them in the room.

I learned to shut up and just listen to people’s stories. Brothers and sisters, shutting up and listening to each other is so important if we want to build a multi-ethnic church. We’re so quick to defend ourselves. We’re so quick to discount one another’s experiences. We’re so quick to dismiss one another’s stories. My friend, Connie Anderson said – in her marriage to Randy they determined really early on – that if one of them said “we have a problem”. Then we have a problem. Shut up and listen. Don’t defend. Don’t discount. Don’t dismiss.

Just as it’s really frustrating to not be listened to in marriage, it’s really frustrating when a person of a different ethnicity is trying to express why something is so hurtful and we discount it or dismiss it or defend ourselves. I learned through catalytic moments that changed my attitudes to just shut up and listen with an open heart!

I’ll just mention one other thing. There have been dozens of moments. In 2002, Marlene and I had a biracial granddaughter, named Naomi. We are passionately in love with Naomi. When Naomi was small, we used to take her to the playground in our neighborhood. Naomi’s incredibly friendly. She used to walk up to the white children and say, “Do you want to play? Do you want to be friends?” They would look at her and walk away. She kept being excluded. So, Marlene began taking her to another playground where there were black and white and biracial children and she was immediately included. Catalytic moment – someone we love is being excluded because of their skin color. Do you know this one?

Let me just give you two more P’s in order to pursue this vision of building a multi-ethnic church. It requires:

Pain and Perseverance

Here's what we read:

Ephesians 2:15b-16

¹⁵ His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross

It took the cross – the painful, bloody death of Jesus - to break down dividing walls and make peace across human divisions. Salvation is both a gift and a task. Salvation is something that we receive as a matter of grace, but it imposes upon us a certain obligations. Obligations to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who went to a cross. If we're going to achieve God's purpose of creating a new humanity, united and yet preserving our distinctiveness. Different Together. The question cannot be: how have we always done things in the past? Let's just continue to do it that way. That's the question of personal comfort.

The question that every serious follower of Christ must ask herself or himself is: how can I serve God's purpose in this world? Right now, how can I see God's Kingdom come in this world? How can I see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven? I want walls between people to be broken down. I want to be part of a church that looks like the Kingdom of God. How will that happen? There's a price to pay!

Many so-called Christians that I've met don't really want to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Many so-called Christians that I've met don't want to be uncomfortable. If we're going to build a multi-ethnic church, brothers and sisters, we have to embrace discomfort. We're going to sing songs in styles that are not our first choice. We're going to listen to communion read by someone in another language. We're going to be led by someone whose approach to leadership is different than our approach. Hear a sermon with a slightly different kind of message that makes us uncomfortable.

When we're uncomfortable, we don't get discouraged or quit! Rather, we celebrate that because it's a sign that we're on the right track! We're stretching. We're growing. We're changing! We love what's happening to us. We embrace it. We say, "We're tasting the Kingdom now. We're experiencing the kingdom now and we love the witness of our church to the larger community. It's possible for blacks and whites to live together in peace."

I'm going to turn the pulpit over now to my dear friend, Charles Montgomery.

CHARLES

SLIDE III. Personal Story

I, too, sing America.

***I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.***

***Tomorrow, I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.***

***Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—***

I, too, sing America.

This poem penned by the Poet Laureate Langston Hughes *is written in large graven letters on the wall of the National Museum of African American History and Culture that opened in Washington DC this weekend.*

But the poem was taught to me as a child by my Aunt Carol--- the same auntie who would traditionally gather the Montgomery Family around the piano to sing the melodious songs of Zion.

We were a family hailing from the clay hills of central Alabama--my grandfather Oliver had made his way to Youngstown, Ohio in search of what Isabel Wilkerson calls The Warmth of Other Suns.

That warmth of the sun is a metaphor meaning the blessing of a better life. At that time there weren't many opportunities for Black folk to secure gainful, and solid employment in the Segregated South --so he made his way up North to Northeastern Ohio and immersed himself in industry there.

Like many from that generation in search for a better life, he dreamed of his children having a better life, a life that would give them access to opportunities not available to him simply because of the color of his skin.

So he downloaded within our family a *non-debatable value* to get an education. For he understood long before Malcolm X said it that education was the passport to our future.

And he argued that it was through education, that we would learn to laugh and eat well

and grow strong so that tomorrow we too could sit at the table.

My Grandfather's gone on now, but my parents made sure I had my passport, and they along with my church family and extended community invested in me, stamped my passport with their blood, sweat and tears----sent me on to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.

It was there at Morehouse I learned the Latin Phrase "Et Facta Est Lux"---which means 'and knowledge is Light'

And Morehouse enlightened me in many ways----many of you may know that Morehouse College's most famous alumnus is MLK Jr.

And though I majored in Mathematics I need to tell you, that you can't matriculate through Morehouse without learning something about Martin.

As a matter of fact they wouldn't even let us enroll on the first day of class unless we could quote some things that he said.

So I learned how to say

- Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.....

We learned how to say

- the ultimate test of a man is not where he stands on comfort and convenience but where he stands on challenge and controversy.

And we could articulate about his dream of how

- *the sons of former slaves and former slave-owners would be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood----and I'll add sisterhood as well.*

And how that panoramic picture of sitting at the table was really a snapshot of what he called the Beloved Community

But if I might be transparent for a moment----when I graduated from Morehouse some 20 (+) years ago though I understood what King was saying intellectually I hadn't internalized it experientially

In other words I knew it my head but I didn't know it in my heart

Someone said that the longest journey a person can take in life is the 18 inches from their head to their heart.

And if the truth be told, God has been taking me upon a journey

And He started orchestrating my affairs and navigating my circumstances

Because he wanted me to learn how to take the things I knew intellectually and start living them out experientially.

And he used 2 events to change the trajectory of my life

Pastor Rich already told you a little about the journey of Vineyard Church becoming a more multiethnic church.

And how they held joint staff meetings with African American churches---well I was on one of those staffs.

....And I remember vividly in that meeting that we were asked to take some time to get to know one another.

...And so we split off into our corresponding counterparts.

And since I was a Youth Pastor at the time one of the folk I met was Kerry Davis, who still leads the VC Students ministry even today.

And Kerry and I started establishing relationship:

We started off talking about the Boys and Girls in our Youth Ministry

And I said I love my boys and girls and Kerry said you know I love my Boys and girls too

Then Kerry said I cheer the Buckeyes and I said I cheer for the Buckeyes too

Then I said well you know I like BBQ and Kerry said I like BBQ Too

And so Kerry and I started having lunch together---and then we started having dinner together---and then we brought our families together

And in that process an amazing thing happened---we began to build trust with one another and that caused us to love one another----and not this syrupy, sentimental, superficial love--we began to love one another in authentic relationship

My point is this--it all started with an invitation to sit around the table

I need to tell you that that table was transformational for me,

Because not only did we talk about our boys and girls

And the Buckeyes

And eat BBQ

But we started talking about our beliefs

In other words we started talking about Jesus---and how many of you know if you spend enough time talking about Jesus, your life will never be the same.

Pastor Rich already told you what a catalytic event is, and how it opens us up to change to consider things from a different perspective

So you might even say that those Conversations with Kerry were catalytic for me as well.

For in those conversations I found myself going through a substantial change.

...a change that would set me up for another catalytic moment.

For some 10 years later when Pastor Rich gave me the invitation to come aboard on the staff and help this church to become a multiethnic church

And something in my heart began to dance

And I thought about The Psalmist who says----out of our hearts flows the issues of life

And I knew I had come to a point in my life

Where I had to take what I had learned intellectually and start living it out experientially....

Because the substance in my heart had change

Somebody may ask Montgomery what was that substance?

Well let me remind you that FAITH is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen

And hear me, it took faith....to step from the comfort of my home church into what was happening in this church

It took faith when people accused me of betraying and turning my back on my race

It took faith when people called ME a white man in a black man's body

I'm here to tell you whomever said sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me----LIED

It hurts when some folk you stood shoulder to shoulder *turns their shoulder and starts giving you the cold shoulder*

It is painful!

IV. Pain and Perseverance

But it pales in comparison to the pain Christ went through when he endured that old rugged cross, and scorned its shame and died for you and for me

My grandfather may have dreamt of me being at the table

My education may have helped develop me for the table

But Christ died for me to **sit** at this table.....

But what I've discovered in my journey from head to heart---is that it's not enough to just come to the table----we've got to learn how to be in community at the table

It's not enough for us to just come to church; what God is asking is will the church act like the church?

God is asking us, will you be salt to the earth?

Will you be a light to the world and a city set up on a hill that cannot be hid?

Hear me, this is not the time to hide our light under a bushel

Especially not in dark times like these:

When there is Sorrow in Seattle

And Tragedy in Tulsa

and Chaos in Charlotte

And Crisis right here in Columbus

What these are my beloved are catalytic events!

And what God is calling us to do is to take what we've learned biblically and start living it out experientially---so that the world will recognize that there is a better way:

and that's what being a Christian is all about!

Now don't get me wrong, I recognize that this is easier said than done.

THIS NOTION OF Learning how to be different together

And live together and thrive together in spite of our differences

Obviously it's a *challenge in our world*

And those of us who are Christians are not and have not been immune to that challenge

I mean, all you have to do is go back *in the Bible* to the first time it even mentions the word Christian

It was there in a place called Antioch, one of the Ancient cities of the Syrian tetrapolis--lying just East of the Mediterranean Sea

There at Antioch the Bible says that they were FIRST called Christians.

Ironically, Vineyard, in the middle of Antioch was a multiethnic church with multiethnic leadership, and one of those leaders was the Apostle Paul himself

And over there in Galatians 2, Paul presents principles to show people of different races to learn how to live together

Now I don't have time to read the entire text, so you're going to have to read it when you get home.

But I want you to note is that the lessons happen around a table

On one occasion in Galatians 2, people of different races are having dinner around a table---and much to their delight the Apostle Peter shows up.

Peter, now, is not too far removed from a cross-cultural encounter with Cornelius, where the Holy Spirit confirmed with him that Christ died for Jews as well as Gentiles.

And God had called the food the Gentiles ate clean for eating.

Now I'm taking this time ya'll to give you this bit of background, because Galatians does not tell us exactly why Peter showed up to dinner in the first place.

But in my sanctified imagination I just believe Peter was a little like me and Kerry Davis:

In other words he wanted to know what it was like to eat BBQ ribs with somebody who didn't look like him!

(And not only ribs, but some macaroni and cheese, collard greens, candied yams, dressing and peach cobbler, topped off with some Greater's ice cream, glory to God!)

But the record is, while Peter was getting his grub on with people of different races, some people from his own race showed up

And when people of his own race began to confront him about eating at the table of equality with people of a different race, the Bible says that Peter began to withdraw.

Because when catalytic moments occur, it's easy to shrink back to places where we feel more comfortable, and to people in which feel more comfortable

But the problem with shrinking back in a catalytic moment is that people who make you feel comfortable *will not necessarily feed your faith but they will fortify your fear*

REMEMBER NOW this is the same Peter---who Jesus says upon this rock I will build my church

This is the same Peter

Who stood up at Pentecost and quoted the Prophet Joel---who said in the last days God will pour out his spirit upon all human flesh

This is the same Peter I told you that had a cross-cultural encounter with Cornelius
SHRINKING BACK IN FEAR

Why does Paul mention Peter in this text?

Because he's trying to teach us that when it comes to learning how to live together that all of us are a work in progress.

No matter how long we've been in church, what are title is, how much we love Jesus none of us are where we ought to be.

And I think I ought to tell you that none of us will be where we ought to be until the fullness of the Kingdom comes, but until that time we ought to bear in mind that every Peter needs a Paul.

Now notice I didn't say that you need to rob Peter in order to pay Paul! I said every Peter needs a Paul!

Paul ya'll represents a person in relationship with you who is able to speak the truth to you in love.

Because while we're learning to live together we're going to make mistakes, we're going to say things we don't mean and mean things we don't say and even do things we may not consciously know we're doing!

That's why every Peter needs a Paul

The record is that when Peter starts to withdraw Paul calls him out on it.

In fact he calls the action hypocritical

That's why I like Paul, because Paul always keeps it '100'

Because in essence what Paul was telling Peter is that you are acting like a hypocrite

Now they tell me that the word hypocrite comes from the world of theatre when people would on masks to act out a role in a play or a drama.

But the problem with masks is that they grin as they live---and they hide our cheeks and shade our eyes---that's what Paul Lawrence Dunbar says:

In other words the mask---makes us play a role that is contrary to the Gospel and who God has created us as Christians to be.

Meaning this---A RACIST CHRISTIAN IS A CONTRADICTION

That's what Paul is trying to convey....

Because racism happens when we play roles in the drama of life, to justify our misplaced convictions that we are better than somebody else.

Because if I'm better than you

Then I'm more valuable than you

And if I'm more valuable than you

Then I deserve more than you

Whether it's more money than you, or more land than you, more opportunities than you, or even more power than you

And the danger of racism is when it moves from a person to a people

That's what was going on in this text, for the Bible says that the rest of the Jews joined in this hypocrisy

So Paul says listen I need to nip this in the bud

I need to pull you back to the table---take off your mask

So you can start seeing people the way God sees them

And you see how beautiful they are and how *AMAZING* things can be *when we end up doing things together.*

The following story about John Newton certainly illustrates my point.

Some of you know that John Newton wrote that Powerful song, Amazing grace---it's one of America's most beloved hymns and sung all across the world.

But what many people do not know is that John Newton was also a slave trader.

but he wrote the song, Amazing Grace—and when he wrote it folk were trying to figure out where the melody of the song came from

Well I'm here to let you know where the melody came from--the words came from Newton---but the melody came from the slaves in the bough of the ship---

Where Black Slaves were bellowing out the guttural songs of prayer to a God to set them free.

And they tell me that Amazing Grace is the only hymn that you have to play with Black Keys----in other words if you don't have the Black Keys----- you can sure have grace but it's not AMAZING!

It's only amazing when you've got to have the Black and the White Keys Playing Together! [AMAZING GRACE]

But not just the Black and White keys playing together----we've got to have all colors across the Kaleidoscope of God's creation playing together

and praying together, and worshipping together, and fighting for justice together

UNTIL WE ALL CAN SING I TOO SING AMERICA—AND WE CAN BE DIFFERENT TOGETHER!

But in order to be different together

That means that we've got to come together

You see it's not enough to be a multicultural church

What God is calling us to be is an intercultural church

An intercultural church is where people of different races, and ethnicities and cultures just don't come to worship together----but they start sharing life together'

And what better way to learn how to share life together

Then to PLAN

PLAN

to start sharing at the table together

That's why in the next 30 days we want to do some thing here at Vineyard Columbus called

1000 Shared Tables..

And what's we're asking you to do is seek out someone of a different race or a different ethnicity, perhaps someone you don't even know...and invite them to share a meal with you around a table of your choice.

And as you share we're not asking you to talk about politics or the presidential election we're just asking you to get to know the other person or the other people around the table.

And we're praying over the next 30 days for 1000 tables to be shared that have different races and different ethnicities surrounding them.

In order to track that we're going to ask you to register at our website, vineyardcolumbus.org to let us know that you're going to do it.

Then there are some of you who are on social media who may have the capability of posting a picture of you having one of these shared meals and we want you to do that

too

And when you post that picture, post it with #1000sharedmeals

Somebody is saying well Pastor Charles I hear you, but that's pushing me out of my comfort zone----well, baby, that's what catalytic moments are designed to do.

To take what you've learned intellectually and live it out experientially

So it's not just in your head but in your heart

Not just in a book but in your life

Not just on Sunday but every day of your life

I think about that scripture over in Acts 2

Acts 2:46

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with gladness and sincere heart.

Which means we don't have to wait to share a meal together. We can share a meal together right now.

In a few moments we're going to partake of the Lord's Supper

(I'm going to release the Campuses to your Campus Pastor to take communion together. God bless you and have a great week)

But here at Cooper Road---I'm going to invite our Senior Pastor, and my brother and friend Pastor Rich Nathan---to help us set the context for communion

RICH

You know, in the early church communion was part of a larger meal called the Love Feast. People actually ate a meal together and then they took communion. The meal served two functions. Both of which are part of our understanding of the Kingdom of God. The first is that it was an anticipation, a pointer to the future kingdom where we are all going to sit down with Jesus and enjoy a feast together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The meal pointed ahead like that old gospel hymn,

I'm going to sit at the welcome table,

I'm going to sit at the welcome table one of these days, Hallelujah.

I'm going to sit at the welcome table,

Sit at the welcome table one of these days, one of these days.

All God's children gonna sit together,
Yes, all God's children gonna sit together one of these days.
All God's children gonna sit together,
All God's children gonna sit together one of these days, one of these days.

And, second, the Love feast was a present manifestation of that future kingdom. The already. They were saying in the church we are already enjoying table fellowship with one another right now. It's what Charles shared about in discussing sharing the table together.

Throughout the history of the church when people prayed for revival they prayed, "Lord, bring revival and let it begin with me." If we want the breaking down of dividing walls – we need to pray the Lord bring racial reconciliation and let it begin with me.

CLOSING

I'm going to close with this Franciscan benediction:

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

Amen.

Can Blacks and Whites Live Together in Peace?

Rich Nathan and Charles Montgomery

September 24 & 25, 2016

Different Together

Ephesians 2:13-17; Galatians 2:11-22

I. Providence

II. Purpose

III. Personal Journey

IV. Pain and Perseverance

V. Plan