

Same Team

Our nation is in the midst of a battle right now. We see injustice and unfortunately what has spilled out of that is a lot of hate and anger. The reaction we see is people against people, but the reality is that the Word tells us what the real battle is...

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

I keep seeing the phrase it's sin not skin and I DO believe that is the root of the problem. I've seen Christians post things against BLM, against protesting, against anyone that believes differently than they do...it's upsetting. And here's why...

We are supposed to be ambassadors for Christ. That means we represent Jesus here on the earth. We have His authority. We act in His name. We possess His power. When we speak and act, it's supposed to be the way that He would approve of.

Jesus spoke against sin not people. In fact the only people He really ever spoke against were the Pharisees...people who had religion but were spiritually blind and culturally blind.

We do not wrestle with flesh and blood...we wrestle with darkness!

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” ~ Martin Luther King Jr.

Church, we are the light and we are people of love because God is love!

We've gotta stop with us vs them. In every area. You have that mindset when you are on opposing teams.

When I go to a Cubs-Cardinals game, as a Cubs fan, it's us vs them. But my desire is to see us defeat them. I don't want them to do well. I want my side to do better and that means they have to do worse. I find myself rooting against them....right? I applaud a dropped fly ball or an errant throw...their failures...as much as I do “our” successes.

Why? Because it's us vs them. We are on opposing teams.

This is what my wife hates about sports. She doesn't like rooting against someone. She thinks we should just root for our team to succeed without rooting for the other team to fail.

And I think she's right. If I'm mindful of that, I try to do it...but you know when I fail to do it? When I'm caught up in my emotions...when things aren't going my way....when I'm around an obnoxious fan of the other team....this is when I lose sight of what my focus should really be on.

You can support someone without being against someone else. I've seen the response to BLM which says ALM, but do you realize that in saying BLM you are NOT saying that All Lives Don't Matter?

The message is that there is injustice and people are hurting and their lives are NOT seen as being of equal value. You know we can support that and not be against something else?

You can be for certain people without being against others. It's not like you only have so much room in your life to be "for" people

When you get married....When you have your first child....you have your second child...you can continue to love them all with all your heart.

If we are going to choose sides, let's choose love, let's choose light...because our job is to fight darkness.

Darkness comes in every skin color and every occupation and every neighborhood.

Our job is to love like Jesus!:

Right after Pentecost, Peter speaks to the crowds...and he says that Jesus (whom they crucified) is Lord and that to be saved they needed to repent, believe in Jesus, get baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then he says:

Acts 2:40 (NKJV)

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

He sounds like Jesus! Jesus called the people a faithless and perverse generation in Matthew 17:17. Back in Deuteronomy, God called the Israelites a crooked and perverse generation.

If something is perverse, it is wicked and has turned away from or rejected what is right. If something is perverse it means it is willfully determined to go counter to what is expected or desired.

Over and over we see the message from heaven as WRONG WAY, WRONG WAY!

You know those street signs that say “wrong way” are to get your attention because you are in a dangerous situation and if you don’t turn around, you are in trouble!

We need people to turn around! That’s repentance. We need a changed mindset...we need to turn to God in the midst of situations we don’t understand!

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave us the great commission.

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

Who do we make disciples of? All of the nations. Some of you have never left Illinois. How are you supposed to make disciples of all the nations?

If we look at it like this, it gives us a pass. It makes it easy to say that it’s for other people to do, you know, those who have a passion for missions.

But the more I thought about it, the more I began to realize something...that’s not the full commission. It’s not just to travel to other lands. Let’s turn to Revelation for some revelation!

Revelation 7:9-10 (NKJV)

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

I want to look at the people that were so great in number that they couldn’t be counted. These people are standing in front of Jesus who is on His throne in heaven. That says something about these people doesn’t it?

They are wearing white robes. This shows they have been purified. They have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (notice Jesus is referred to as the Lamb in this picture). They have been saved! They have been redeemed!

And they wave palm branches and praise Jesus! Who are these people?

all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues

- Nations - people of the same nature or genus - where
- Tribes - kindreds, related- who

- Peoples - same stock (use) - why
- Tongues - language, speech - how

No matter how we classify people based on where, who, why, or how...they are God's creation, whom He loves and if we are in Christ then we too will love.

There are four classifications: nations, tribes, peoples, tongues. The number 4 represents God's creative works.

So what Jesus is showing us, what is being revealed in revelation is that He created us all, we are all the works of His hands, we all have value and we are all on the same team!

It's about time we started acting like it...people of God!

Jesus had a heart for those who didn't have a voice. He stood in the face of evil and dead religion and reached out His hand.

Do you remember the woman caught in adultery? This woman was guilty of sin. And by law she was to be punished. As they brought her to Jesus, this woman had no right to speak. If she had even tried she would have been silenced. Because not only was she an adulteress, but she was a woman. So Jesus does what Jesus always does, He exposed sin and darkness in the hearts of the accusers and gave the woman a voice.

He actually said to her, "where are your accusers?" He took action and by taking action, He took a risk. He didn't think so highly of His life that He wouldn't put it on the line for someone without a voice. There is nothing to indicate that He was concerned about what might happen to Him.

What we see is a person in need, without a voice, and someone stands up for her.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus did this? Why did He stand up for this woman...she was actually guilty (we know this because the bible says she was caught in the act). Why did Jesus defend this voiceless woman?

I believe it's because He was coming against the darkness in the men who brought her to Him. Many have speculated on what Jesus wrote in the sand. The common educated guess is that He wrote their sins out and that's why they left, one by one. It was as they saw their sin appear in the sand.

It seems that Jesus was trying to prove this point:

"We judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behaviour." ~ Stephen Covey

The accusers had plenty of their own issues...and here they drag this woman to be condemned "in the name of justice" but they want justice for her behavior. "Look what she did."

Have you ever tried to trick someone by having them look one way so they hopefully won't see what's over here? "Hey look at that?" Who hadn't done that to snatch a chicken nugget or a cookie?

Or to hide what you are doing because you don't want others to see...

Why do we judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behavior?

Because we think more of ourselves than we do of other people. OUCH!

We justify our actions. Tell me you've never done it! You do something you shouldn't and you point to your "track record" or your history. You deflect attention from this singular issue and point to your intentions. You might say "come on man, you know me! I wouldn't do something like that, or at least that's not how I meant it!"

Yet we often don't know what other people "mean" when they do or say something that upsets us. Instead we just judge them based on what they did. We don't care if we don't understand. They shouldn't have done it.

See the hypocrisy? Judge me by what I meant, I'll judge you by what you did. That is thinking more over yourself than you do of others.

Romans 12:3 (NKJV)

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Paul's point here is not that we can't have confidence, in fact we should have great confidence in who we are IN CHRIST!

However we are to see ourselves soberly. Be honest about who we are apart from Christ...sinners in need of a Savior.

And I think we can see that it's implied that if we aren't to think too highly of ourselves, it removes barriers between ourselves and others. You are not "better" than someone else. We are not on opposing teams. We don't look at others as less, if anything we should honor them as more!

Philippians 2:3 (NKJV)

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

How could we change the world if we looked at everyone as better than us? If we treated all people as equals...all created by God?

They saw racism in the days the bible was written. There were real issues between Jews and Samaritans. Jews and Greeks. But what Jesus did when He died on the cross is this:

Ephesians 2:14 (NKJV)

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

Jesus is our peace. He is the one who unites us. He has broken down the wall that separates people. This was a declaration that we are all one in Him. It's time we started acting like it.

Luke 6:31 (NKJV)

And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

Will you stand for the human race? Will you stand for all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.

Will you reject the mindset of darkness that says some people are superior to others?

Will you confront any biases you have in your own mind and actions?

Will you say today, enough is enough?

For God so loved the WORLD...that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

God sees all of His creation as equal, all in His image, He came for all, died for all, rose for all.

Same Team. Teammates fight for each other....and they fight together. Let's battle the darkness!

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." - Romans 10:12-13