

# Racial Justice Sunday

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

*Is 58:1-12; Ps 112:1-10; 1 Cor 2:1-12; Mt 5: 13-20*



multicultural church  
intercultural habit

## Discipleship as Anti-Racist Living

Michael Jagessar

Discipleship is the big conversation point across our churches. We are all wrestling with what it means to be a people Walking the Way of Jesus. We are also exploring the holy habit of discipleship in our renewed and renewing search for what it means to be followers of Jesus. This same yet new Jesus invites us into a journey of fullness of life for all. This 'fullness of life' invitation asks what discipleship as 'anti-racist living' might look like.

Discipleship as an anti-racist habit, invites us to examine how racism and its related injustices operate in systemic ways. Are we able to move beyond the 'good intentions' of resolutions and statements? An anti-racist habit is the practice of identifying, naming, challenging, and changing the values and

structures that perpetuate systemic racism.

The 'holiness' aspect of this habit invites us to ask honest questions such as: what about power imbalances, disparities, privilege, Whiteness, and exceptionalism of all sorts? What about our precious theologies that often hide and propagate racist actions and privilege?

Discipleship as anti-racist living is a proactive way of seeing and being in life. It is an invitation to share in the transforming 'economy of fullness of life for all.'

To this end, we offer to you this collection of resources for Racial Justice Sunday 2020 in the hope of walking the way of God's radical statement: Jesus.



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## MORE THAN AN INVITATION...

You have all been invited at this time to this place

**We don't just want an invitation: We want to be welcomed.**

You are all offered a warm welcome to this place

**We don't just want a welcome: We want to have a voice.**

You are all welcome and this is a place for listening

**We don't just want a voice:**

**We want it to be heard.**

You are all welcome here, and your story will be heard

**We don't only want to be heard: We want to be believed.**

You are welcome to this place where no truth is denied

**We don't only want to be believed: We want to be trusted.**

You are welcome to this place where your words are accepted

**We don't only want to be trusted: We want to be loved.**

You are welcome to this place where God's love embraces all

**We don't only want to be loved: We want to know we belong.**

Whoever belongs to God, belongs among us, for we are one in Christ

Richard Becher

Let justice roll down like waters

And righteousness like a mighty stream

For we are all called In the face of Babylon

To join the struggle for freedom

*CWM Legacies Lament*



## SICK – a poem

I am sick of religion!  
Sick of the words,  
the noise,  
the lies -  
teaching people which  
people  
to despise:  
Who to judge  
and who must fall  
in the name of God  
who loves us all.



...

Love the Lord, your God;  
love the neighbours who  
God, in God's wisdom,  
has gifted to you:  
In a nutshell  
that's what God requires us  
to do.  
So I'm sick of the extras,  
the add-ons,  
the fluff -  
my heart and my soul,  
they cry out 'Enough!'

I imagine  
God's sick of it too.

© Karen Campbell, June 2016  
(see website for full poem)

**Black is what I am...**  
**It's who I am...**

**It is my pride.**

*Karen Campbell*



multicultural church  
**intercultural habit**

## BLACK – a poem

If the night sky wasn't inky  
Could the stars shine so  
bright?  
And if there wasn't darkness,  
Tell me, how could light be  
light?  
No dark depths of earth -  
How would the flora grow?  
Black is essential, don't you  
know.

You tell me black is no good -  
The shade of evil, shade of  
sin;  
How do I then make sense

Of the blackness of my skin?  
The skin I didn't choose  
No more than you could  
choose your own;  
The skin that I was gifted -  
Only skin I've ever known.


Black is what I am; it's who I  
am;  
It is my pride.  
It's the strength on which I  
stand - Where I refuse to be  
denied.  
Black speaks of where I'm  
going -

How the world relates to me;  
Black speaks of where I've come from -  
Heritage and history.

But it's hard not to internalise  
The message all around -  
Before a word is spoken  
That in Black offence is found;  
Explicit or implied.  
Yet from your view you cannot see  
The shackles to be broken  
Until Black lives full and free.

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## CWM: LEGACIES OF SLAVERY – a lament

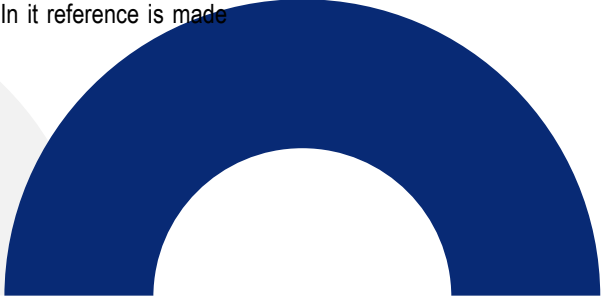


The Council for World Mission has produced a PowerPoint lament. It follows excerpts of testimony by William Hankey, the LMS Treasurer, who was called before the British Parliamentary Select Committee on Slavery on July 20 1832. He was to give evidence as the Committee considered the manumission of slaves held in the British Empire. It transpired that Hankey owned

300 enslaved people in Trelawney, Jamaica. He was also the LMS banker and received in excess of GBP600,000 'compensation' for the 'loss' of his slaves.

to 'Maroon Spirit.' the Maroons were a group of runaway slaves in Jamaica who fiercely protected their freedom and life outside of slavery.

The lament can be found on the Global and Intercultural website for download (see last page.) In it reference is made





## WHEN THE POOR WIDOW SPEAKS – A de-colonial Reading

Life wasn't all too good with the Roman oppression all around. Soldiers on their horses march every day on our streets to display their military power. Empire has taken over every institution in our country including our temple, for now our religious leaders speak the language of the temple and exploit the poor and vulnerable. My devout loving husband raised an alarm against the empire and exposed the exploitation in the temple, for which act he was falsely framed with charges of treason, incarcerated for

years and eventually killed by the military powers of the empire. I have now become a young widow, left alone to take care of my children with the meagre means of living. As a single woman I go from pillar to post in meeting the ends of our lives. With the growing injustice in the temple I have stopped going to the temple now, with hope in God just dwindling about. My name is forgotten, my voice is unheard and am pushed into 'unspeakability' by the society around.

Over the past few days I have heard of the Jesus' movement going on, for I heard of a man called Jesus who was speaking like my husband in all courage and boldness against the exploitation done by the religious leaders and the empire. I knew that this man called Jesus will not live long, for he will face the fate of death unjustly like my husband. I rejoiced for the fact that he exposed the evils of those in the powers, which gave me a hope that God is not dead...

### “God is alive!”

...God is alive! In that sense of hope, I thought let me go to the temple to offer and pray for justice and peace in our land.

As I went near the temple, I saw a great crowd moving in and out busy with buying and selling of goods. How sad the temple once built for worship has now become a place of unjust commercial activities. As was the tradition, women are not allowed any further into the temple except into the outer court. Then I saw those men, the religious leaders with long robes in the temple who mocked at me, calling me names and laughed over the death of my husband. Reminding that anyone speaking against empire will have to die.

In all that buzz of business going around, I went into a corner to find some peace and pray to God for peace and justice. I wept and prayed to God for liberation of our land from oppression of the empire. I wept and prayed for my kids and for the difficulties we have been facing. In that time of prayer, God listened to my prayer and gave me a spirit of peace, which the world did not give. God strengthened me by calling me to make myself present at the temple to keep reminding the religious leaders of their exploitation. Yes, I thought I should visit temple everyday to keep reminding these men on long robes of their fake spirituality for they do things in the temple only for the

'sake of appearance' without any fear in God or the Scripture.

Then towards the end went to the treasury box to make an offering to God and dropped the remaining two coins that I have all, saying a prayer 'God bring us peace and justice.' Just before me, I saw this man on long robe offering a huge sum of amount in the offertory box, again showing off his pride exposing his false spirituality. I went in all sincerity and faithfulness and not only dropped the two coins but also offered myself in the presence of God to fight injustice by my presence in the temple. After all... (P.T.O.)



(...After all), our Scripture says to care for the widows and orphans, and here are men in their long robes exploiting us.

I made my offering and was on my way home. Suddenly I saw this man from that just movement, Jesus standing at the offering box and saying to his disciples that I have put in more than those who are contributing for the treasury. I smiled at his observation, thinking I don't care what I have given, for I

have given my offering heartfully to God and not for the sake of the people. For Jesus recognised that I have given it in my poverty, because I came into the temple to offer myself for peace and justice in the land. Then those dozen men with this man Jesus were surprised with their mouths wide open, not understanding all Jesus said. However, I went home that day with a sense of hope, with a sense of commitment to make my presence in the temple a symbol of resilience and to contest injustice in all forms. Later as I thought this

man Jesus was killed and was crucified, buried and then in a miraculous way God on the third day rose him, and from then on, I began to follow Jesus, and hosted a church at our house. God was faithful to me, I brought up my children and they journeyed far and wide to share the testimony of Jesus in all the Asia minor. God of grace did not leave me nor forsake me. Jesus Remembered me in the temple, Jesus Recognised my offering, Jesus Revealed the hypocrisy of the men on long robes. *(end)*

## Rajbharat Patta



# Thinking about Whiteness

by Zaidie Orr



Thinking about Whiteness is a real challenge. I am not sure how it would go down from the pulpit. I believe people need to hear about 'Whiteness' in conversation, where they have time to reflect on what it means to be white. Why is it White people automatically take up the position of power? Why should they study 'other' groups while they themselves are not subjected to the same scrutiny?

White people are not used to being grouped, labelled or having their behaviour called into question. For many White people, 'white is the norm'. This is because White has been 'invisible' for years. To be sure, the generation in our (my) congregation would find it difficult to take on board.

We have spoken about this issue all too often. Yet still the quote from Marcus Garvey may be too strong, too in-your-face and out-spoken for many. Perhaps we should rather approach this issue as a series of studies, taking each issue separately, and examining why each leads to such strength of feeling...

I think that Whiteness is so embedded in this culture that White people may take that this message from the pulpit as a threat to their humanity.

I strongly believe that with all the attention currently being given to people of other skin colour, that we might get an adverse response. White people may begin to feel that they are in the minority and that they need to be pushing back to ensure they have their voices heard.

I am sure that research will support the fact among the the reasons why certain political parties are popular is because some dis-affected people in our society feel that 'their country' is being overrun by non-whites. All too often, our churches are a mirror reflection of our society.

Then there is my favourite emotion – another possible outcome may be that White people totally 'get it.' They may even face up to selfishness and guilt. Imagine: White people sensitised to their Whiteness, knowing their history and on Racial Justice Sunday truly repenting of this deeply embedded structural sin.

So, despite all my reservations, I think Whiteness is a topic that needs to be addressed.

"The white man has succeeded in subduing the world by forcing everyone to think his way..."

The white man's propaganda has made him the master of the world, and all those who have come in contact with it and accepted it have become his slaves."

*Marcus Garvey*

## Sermon Seeds

Zaidie Orr



Here are some suggestions:

- Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16: 19-31): why was the poor man named and the rich man was not? Lazarus went to be with Abraham not the Father in heaven (is being with Abraham being in heaven?). Is this about our relationship with each other? As the story progressed even while in difficulties (Hades) the rich man still asked the poor man to do him a couple of favours. Note how privilege works. He is still demanding it even in Hades. Did he ever speak to Lazarus all those years he sat outside his gate? What are some of the issues here?
- Sarah – Hagar – Abraham: reflect on the issues of power, control and privilege.
- The Canaanite woman: 'woman of great faith' was not Jesus' initial response – so what happened to Jesus? Do not try to rescue Jesus from his prejudices. Consider the difficult conversations we need to have with each other and the importance of listening, learning and changing.

# Meditation on Whiteness

Zaidie Orr



**Whiteness** is just one shade away from ...

We are all created in the image of God.  
And God gave us one skin of many shades to cover the body of Christ.  
Are we not kin?

What and where did it all go wrong, when one group became dominant and the other became marginalised because of the shade of their skin ...

And some of us were just expected to take it on the chin?

And some of us were just expected to take it on the chin?

Then over time, the stories of the marginalised although intertwined with our oppressors, have been eroded, erased, re-written or even re-worded, without reference to us.

It seems like at all points in our history we were seen as heathens and created through sin....

Never through God's will. Centuries later, there are those of us who are still struggling to fit in.

Will we ever win?

Jesus often refers to the poor, the slave, the prisoner, the child as the kingdom of heaven

Let us look around to make the prayer which unifies us ... a reality and in the body of Christ make us one in skin, shade and colour.

**Whiteness** is just one shade away from...





## CHRISTIAN LOVE – A hymn

Christian love is not romantic,  
not soft-focussed, twee or sweet,  
Christian love's not 'likes', nor dating,  
far more real than text or tweet.  
Christian love means life-long struggle;  
lived-out kindness ev'rywhere.  
Christian love must echo Jesus:  
selfless, soulful, steeped in prayer.

Christian love respects the other,  
seeks to understand, not judge;  
takes delight in mutual learning  
doesn't force and doesn't fudge.  
Christian love's an arduous journey,  
finding self by giving all;  
serving, sharing, helping, caring;  
full response to Jesus' call.

Christian love cries out for justice  
wheresoever it's denied;  
joins the struggle, makes the protest,  
stays the course, eyes open wide.  
Christian love rejects what's racist,  
sexist, ageist, prejudiced,  
turns against each nurtured bias,  
learning daily to resist.

Christian love is learned from Jesus,  
walks his way and bears his cross;  
self-surrenders, like our Saviour;  
gains much more than what is lost.  
Christian love is so persistent,  
it outlasts all other things;  
by its hope, its faith, its struggle,  
it's the song all heaven sings!

### Resource of Interest

<https://www.reform-magazine.co.uk/2014/09/skin-conditioned/>

*Tune: Ode to joy MP 600 or another pacey 87 87 D  
tune*

*A song for Racial Justice Sunday inspired by 1  
Corinthians 13.4-7*

**John Campbell** © 2020 Kevin Mayhew Ltd  
*freely available for racial justice worship  
services in 2020*





## WHAT YOU ARE HIDES WHO YOU ARE! – a poem

Thank you, Lord,  
that you see us  
for WHO we are  
not WHAT we are!  
WHAT we are  
is young or old;  
strong or weak;  
rich or poor;  
black or white;  
male or female,  
but you see us  
for WHO we are  
so thank you, Lord,  
for seeing in us  
more than WHAT we are.

WHAT we are  
can be defined  
by place of birth;  
our faith belief  
or our tradition  
or how we look  
but you see us  
for WHO we are  
so thank you, Lord,

or how we look  
but you see us  
for WHO we are  
so thank you, Lord,  
for seeing in us  
more than WHAT we are.

WHO we are  
is made by You  
with you in us  
and us in you  
shaped by love  
to live and grow  
to be your peace,  
with words of hope  
and healing hands....

Thank you, Lord,  
that you see us  
for WHO we are  
not WHAT we are!

Forgive us, Lord,  
when we see people  
for WHAT they are  
without knowing them  
for WHO they are  
so miss you in them  
and will never know  
which one you were....

Open our eyes, Lord,  
to see what you see  
because WHAT people are  
can hide WHO they are.....

AMEN

**Richard Becher**

## Two Prayers

God-of-righteous-dreaming, give us an enlarged imagination to dream new possibilities, to imagine a world where transformation will happen, where creation is mended and restored, and where exiles and strangers can find a home and live in peace. Give us overflowing and extravagant hearts so that our whole lives may be full of and mirror your dream and promise of goodness and abundance.

God-who-walks-with-us, ahead, beside, behind, above, below and around us, you who journey with wandering and displaced people: clear our eyes to see you in the many displaced sisters and brothers at our borders, gates and doors; give us just minds and confident hearts to protest, challenge, and partner with others to turn hard, callous and inhumane policies into habits of generosity, compassion and welcome at our gates; and through your Spirit strengthen our resolve to work towards a new world where all can share in full and flourishing life.

**Michael Jagessar**



# Brief Reflections on Lectionary Readings

Michael Jagessar

## Isaiah 58:1-12

*God's kind of worship*

There is no beating around the bush here: worship unaccompanied by just actions is empty. Isaiah dissents: a privatised, religious fast that ignores public ethics like economic exploitation is bad faith. A "true fast," says Isaiah, "loosens the chains of injustice, sets the oppressed free, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and shelters the wanderer". Pouring out ourselves on the side of and for the sake of justice and righteousness is what God calls us to.

- Reflect on these challenging words from Isaiah: what are we missing to notice and to do that God notices and desires us to act on and respond to?
- Reflect on 'doing justice' as a spiritual practice.

## Psalm 112:1-10

*Give-away God*

Generosity is more subversive than often recognised. Our current economic model is built on the breaking of a quite a few of the commands of the Divine, with lying, stealing, coveting and idolatry at the heart. It is fascinating how we continue to locate generosity primarily around 'gratitude' and miss that the other side of this subversive habit is that of total divestment. Generosity is not about 'giving till it hurts': it is about giving till it is all gone. This is the kind of justice the whole of creation asks of us – generosity as total divestment.

- Consider what 'good life' and 'living well' is about and the implications for justice. What does giving-away look like for you?

## 1 Corinthians 2:1-12

*Searching Spirit*

Taking on the injustices around and within us is a long and tiring haul. Therefore, it is comforting and hopeful to know that we are not alone. It is through the Spirit accompanying us that we can embody the 'mind of Christ' to be able to imagine the shape of that 'new creation'. Challenged here also are assumptions around wisdom and power, noting the foolishness and powerlessness of God's act of love in Christ for the whole world.

- In the context of Racial Justice Sunday what change of heart and mindset is needed as we live out anti-racist habits?

## Matthew 5: 13-20

*Salty Christians*

Claiming an identity is only part of journey. Embodying and living out that identity is often the challenging part. The call to live out our identity as salt and light as people of the Jesus way is as urgent as ever. The words of the gospel here underscore the sort of commitment and vigilance towards right-living (righteousness) for the whole of God's creation.

- In the justice calling of your community, reflect on growing injustices and salt losing its saltiness. Where in our life together, do we need to throw greater light to uncover systemic evil?



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