

Taking a Micah 6:8 Approach: A CBWC Response to Racial Injustice

(sent via mailchimp on June 5, 2020 in response to George Floyd death in the USA)

I'd like to share with you several voices that I have either read or heard over the last week in response to the death of George Floyd and the crying out for the end to systemic racism in our world.

The first voice is a quote from the Canadian Council of Churches of which the CBWC is a member, and the second voice comes from former US President Jimmy Carter. As followers of Jesus, these are words we are called to affirm.

"The events of the past weeks reveal broken relationships. Join us in condemning racism in all its forms and expressions in our communities and in our churches. Join us in committing to name racism and to make personal, institutional, and societal change so that no one experiences fear, hatred, oppression, violence, or marginalization because of the colour of their skin".

- Letter from Canadian Council of Churches.

Dehumanizing people debases us all; humanity is beautifully and almost infinitely diverse. The bonds of our common humanity must overcome the divisiveness of our fears and prejudices. - Jimmy Carter

There is a freedom in being able to point to our neighbours to the south and say, *"at least we aren't like them"*, and yet part of the systemic problem of racism is when we make such a claim - thinking we are better than someone else.

A third voice is from one closer to home, and it reminds us that Canadians are not exempt from racism. This week I heard about the heart wrenching dialogue between a former pastor, who is Canadian and was raised in an African country, and a leader from his former church who said to him, *"...a janitor or any other odd job you can find, is best for immigrants in this country. Canadians will find it uncomfortable to listen to your accent and different way of thinking in the pulpit no matter how many degrees or anointing you have (pastor's name). My son, consider finding a school board cleaning job because they have union and that is*

so good! Then you can do preaching on the side as a hobby.” We as Canadians have much to do to get our own house in order.

The fourth voice I have for you today offers us hope by considering some practical steps in building bridges with people different than ourselves. These words come from a Canadian missionary, living and serving in Belize.

I don't know exactly what steps can be made to solving the racial divide, but I have a humble suggestion. Turn off the news. Turn off social media, turn off the voices telling you what to think. Go to your friend who was raised eating different foods and share them with her. Sit for tea with a friend who has different skin colour and tell stories and ask questions and be open and hearing and kind and inquisitive. Pull into a driveway and make a new friend. You might just find that your new friend who looks nothing like you has a heart for you, has dreams and hopes for your kids and their community and has kindness to share. This has been my experience. Look for it.

Intentionally create spaces for connection. - Alicia Dewbury

And finally, Eugene Peterson, in his paraphrase of Romans 12 challenges us with these words.

1-2” So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you”.

May the lessons of the last couple of weeks allow us to not fit too comfortably into the culture around us. May we keep our attention fixed on God, and may we show the love of Jesus to all He brings across our paths.

Learning and serving with you, for Him!

Rob Ogilvie