

Restoration Revisited (11): One Church in a Divided World

(Ephesians 2:14-16, 3:10-11)

I. Introduction

- A. Every kid growing up in church looks forward to being in the youth group
 - 1. My first time in a youth group devo was on April 17, 1968. I was 12
 - a. How do I remember? It was the Sunday after assassination of MLK
 - b. I remember because older teen said, “*I glad someone shot that n...*”
 - 2. Kids snickered and the adult in the room said nothing. Who said...
“*The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing*”
 - a. That is attributed to Dr. King’ it was first said by Edmund Burke
 - b. Good people often say nothing in the face of racism, prejudice, hate
- B. Today we continue “*Restoration Revisited*” (Lesson 11 in a 8-week series)
 - 1. What does it mean to be a first century church in the modern world
 - a. We’ve mentioned the motto, “*We do Bible things in Bible ways...*”
 - b. Not true. Most of what we do in church were centuries away in NT
 - c. Buildings-n-bulletins, classes-n-cups, pulpits and praise teams, etc
 - 2. But if you say something long and loud enough, it becomes true
 - a. Because we thought it was true, we began to think we were true
 - b. Last week we saw the fiction of seeing ourselves as the one church
- C. Today we look at becoming “*the one church*” in totally different way
 - 1. Even when we were “the one church” we were two—black and white
 - a. Let me borrow a bit from a recent presentation by Rick Atchely
 - 1) 10% of our churches are “multiracial” (*less than 80% same race*)
 - 2) Churches are ten times more segregated than their neighborhood
 - 3) Churches are 20 times more segregated than their nearest school
 - b. This quote did come from Dr. King on Meet the Press in 1963
It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is 11:00 Sunday morning.
 - c. According the stats we just saw, that is just as true today as in 1963
 - 2. I want to suggest to you today that God wants us to be one church
 - a. He doesn’t want two church, one black and one white
 - b. What it means to be one church in a world that is black and white?

II. One Church in a Divided World: The New Testament

- A. We think we invented the subject of race, but race was at the center of NT
 - 1. You know race is a social construct; there's no scientific difference
 - a. We see external difference, but under the skin, we are all the same
 - b. Lynn and I did DNA tests; 1% of my DNA is from central Africa
 - c. I'm as African-American as Elizabeth Warren is Native American!
 - 2. In the Bible, the "racial" difference was between Jew and Gentile
 - a. Jews hated Gentiles; Pharisees believed they were fuel for hell
 - b. Roman world reciprocated; they literally invented anti-Semitism
 - 3. As we talk about Jew and Gentile, swap those terms with black & white
- B. It wasn't long after the church was established that racial issue arose
 - 1. Saul and Barnabas in [Acts 11](#) begin a work in Antioch in Syria
 - a. This was the first mass conversion of Gentiles & integrated church
 - b. In [Acts 13](#), Paul and Barnabas begin their first missionary trip
 - c. Many more Gentiles come to Christ and the Jews at first rejoiced
 - 2. Problem with dogs chasing cars—don't know what to do if catch one
 - a. What was the church to do with Gentiles? Some knew ([Acts 15:1,4](#))
 - b. That was the single issue debated at the Jerusalem conference
 - c. **Result:** Gentiles don't have to keep Law, but what to do with them?
- C. What if you heard some ISIS and Taliban fighters had converted to Christ?
 - 1. That'd be great! But then what if they wanted to place membership?
 - a. What is great idea in the abstract can be get very messy in concrete
 - b. That was the problem with Jewish Christians accepting Gentiles
 - 2. Church could have done one of two things in dealing with race
 - a. Segregation would be easier; let teach have their own church
 - b. Integration would be messier; all kinds of practical issues (potluck)
 - 3. Which one did they choose? Chose to be one church, not two churches
 - a. That was not a pragmatic choice; it was theological. It was gospel.
 - b. Paul deals with this topic of equality in just about all of his letters
 - c. Our ability to be one church of all races is at the center of gospel

III. One Church in a Divided World: Ephesians 2-3

- A. In **Ephesians 2**, Paul is talking about the gospel of grace (**Eph 2:8**)
1. We're saved because of a cross, not because of what we've done
 - a. What does Paul think we'll do if we think we save ourselves (**2:9**)
 - b. We're not saved by doing good; we saved because God is gracious
 - 1) That doesn't mean works are unimportant or optional (**2:10**)
 - 2) We are created as God's "masterpiece" (NLT) to do His will
 - c. He goes on to say that those who were far away are now near (**2:13**)
 - 1) This is Geometry; if two points get nearer a third point... what?
 - 2) As Jew and Gentile get closer to Christ... and to one another
 2. Here's the payoff—this was the point of the gospel (**Eph 2:14-16**)
 - a. He is our peace? Is that peace with God or each other? Yes it is!
 - 1) The cross tears down the wall that separated us from God
 - 2) But the separation he's talking about is between Jew/Gentile
 - b. Unity of races was not a by-product of gospel, it was the point
 - c. It was his purpose to create a new humanity out of Jew and Gentile
 3. If you miss the unity of the races in the gospel, you missed the point!
- B. Paul goes even further as he talks about the mystery of Christ (**Eph 3:4**)
1. What do we think of when we think of the word "mystery?"
 - a. **Sherlock Holmes**: Puzzle you must piece-together to figure it out
 - b. **Unsolved Mysteries**: Something unexplained that isn't figured out
 2. This is a third kind, one that can't be figured out but is revealed by God
 - a. What is the mystery that Paul is describing here? (**Eph 3:6**)
 - b. It's Paul's job to proclaim the gospel and this mystery (**Eph 3:8-9**)
 3. Paul says that this is the intended purpose of the church (**Eph 3:10-11**)
 - a. When the church does its job right, it shows off how smart God is
 - 1) What is the church job? To reveal and live out the mystery
 - 2) Mystery? That Jews-Gentiles are brought together in Christ
 - b. "*Manifold*" or "*multifaceted*" is literally the word "*multicolored*"
 4. His wisdom is multi-colored; church declares His wisdom when we are

IV. Conclusion

- A. What is the difference between prejudice, discrimination and racism
 1. What's the difference in "prejudice" & "racism?" (often used alike)
 - a. **Prejudice:** Pre-judging an individual based perception of race
 - b. **Discrimination:** You act on that prejudice and thus harm other
 - c. **Racism:** Is when that discrimination is institutionalized into system
 2. Prejudice would be to assume that tall people all play basketball
 - a. Discrimination is you don't choose tall people to play softball
 - b. Racism is when you slant the system tall people can only play ball
 3. The facts clearly show this institutional racism at work in our culture
 - a. Blacks are given more jail time than whites convicted of same crime
 - b. White convicts hired before blacks with no record/same education
 - c. Black male born in 2001 has 32% chance of going jail (6% whites)
 - d. Black women are by far the most likely demographic to be evicted
 - e. Black men are far more likely to get pulled over in traffic stop
 4. Why is all that true? Because racism has been handed down from past
- B. I'd like to think that I am fair and fairly "woke" when it comes to race
 1. I'm not racist, but I have benefited from "*White Privilege.*" How?
 - a. Parents bought a house in Beaconsdale neighborhood in 1953
 - 1) They paid it off (early) and sold it for nice profit in 1969
 - 2) They used that to build the house they sold to me (full appraisal)
 - b. A black family couldn't buy that house on Francis St. in 1953
 - c. Couldn't have the same equity in 1969. Could pass as much to kids
 2. My dad was hard working man, but he benefitted from a racist system
 - a. When we talk about stuff like this, white folks tend to get defensive
 - b. We want to insist that we're colorblind, "*I just don't see color*"
 - 1) What that is saying is, "*I don't recognize racial problems*"
 - 2) To not see real racial problems is definition of white privilege!
 - c. The country's moral compass was broken by slavery/Jim Crow
 - d. A system of institutional racism is the result of that brokenness

C. So what are we supposed to do about it? Let me suggest a few things

1. **First**, Paul thinks the answer to racial division is God's church
 - a. The wisdom of God is multicolored; God people must be as well
 - b. What is the picture of God's kingdom around the throne (**Rev 7:9**)
 - 1) The church in heaven will be together in one place to worship
 - 2) How can church be multicolored in heaven if we aren't here?
 - c. We can't follow Christ and be His church without being one church
 - d. Rick Atchley tells of one of the matriarchs of his church as a teen
 - 1) There were pictures those in Africa just baptized by missionary
 - 2) She was upset and wanted them removed from bulletin board
I just can't bear the thought of being in heaven with all those people
 - 3) Atchley thought, "*Lady, you've got nothing to worry about*"
2. **Second**, that means the church must work at becoming multicolored
 - a. You know what is often said when we talk about a blended church
It's natural for people to be more comfortable worshipping with others like them
 - 1) It is natural... but we are called to be supernatural and spiritual
 - 2) It is comfortable... we're not called to comfort but faithfulness
 - b. We'll have to be unnatural and uncomfortable to be multicolored
 - c. Study: Two types of churches are more successful at integrating
 - 1) **Megachurches**: They attract a lot of people & different people
 - 2) **Intentional**: These do things to specifically focus on unity
 - d. We missed the boat on megachurch, but we can be intentional
3. **Finally**, When talking about race, we need to listen/learn, not defend
 - a. Not everyone's story is NOT the same— but everyone has a story
 - b. I can't see race the same as African-American brothers. I can listen
 - 1) Try to understand racial issues in the stories of those around you
 - 2) You will not learn the truth on Fox or CNN—turn the noise off
 - 3) Listen. If you disagree, say, "*Tell me more; help me understand*"

D. People often remark of the diversity we have here (we're part of 10%!)

1. We can do a better job of living out the multicolored wisdom of God
2. If you can think of some ways we can do that better, tell me more