

## Relationships, Race & The Coming Kingdom



### **Recognizing Our Brokenness**

*"This Revolution is genuine because it was born from the same womb that always gives birth to massive social upheavals - the womb of intolerable conditions and unendurable situations."*

*- Martin Luther King, Jr.*

### **Rethink**

No true-to-life story begins, or develops, without some kind of brokenness to heal, a battle to fight, or a situation in need of salvation. There have always been circumstances which create the need for *resolution*, *restoration*, and *renewal*. Few people (if any) would deny that our world is not as it should be. Corruption, abuses, violence, deceitfulness and self-preservation -with their accompanying vices- are rampant from counties to countries.

Our current domestic upheaval around issues of race, politics and systemic injustices are a case in point. We live in these places, and are a part of these communities. We're all impacted by, and a part of, the problems our world faces because *"The seed of every sin known to man is in my heart"* (Robert Murray McCheyne). Our first course of action in every situation is to align ourselves with reality, to agree with God about the truth we may have hitherto been unable to see, hear or understand. In short, to *repent*.

### **Read**

#### **Nathan Rebukes David**

*1 And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to*

## Relationships, Race & The Coming Kingdom

*take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 5 Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."*

*7 Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?' You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites."*

- 2 Samuel 12:1-9, ESV

### Reflect

- A) When it's just you and Our Father, where in your soul are you keenly aware you're in desperate need of restoration? How does that feel? What is Our Father's response to you acknowledging this?
- B) What are some situations in your own circle of relationships that have known pain from the brokenness in our own souls? What do you do with that?
- C) Where would you like to see the LORD bring healing and renewal right now? Where does *hope* lead you? Ask Him.

### Reframe

*"Oh Lord, you who know how we are made and remember that we are but dust, we confess to you our weakness of body, heart, and mind. We do not know what or how to pray in the face of all that threatens to overwhelm us today. We ask therefore that you would give us your Spirit in order to intercede for us with wordless groans, so that we might know that you have not abandoned us, but rather met us in the lowliness of our humanity where, to our great surprise, you birth new life through your Word of Life. In your name we pray. Amen."*

- Rev. Dr. W. David O. Taylor

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### Receiving the Call [to Mission]

*"Proclaiming the kingdom of God and prophetically calling out the ways of Babylon, repenting of personal sin and systemic sin is what God calls every Christian to do no matter your tradition. This is what makes the church relevant to society at any age."*

- David M. Bailey

## Relationships, Race & The Coming Kingdom

### Rethink

Right now our nation is experiencing pain from something very old, and also birth pangs from something new on the horizon... The current riots, violence and loss of life which the more recent unsettling deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd have led to people crying out in anger, pain, and desperation. While the riots, looting, and death which happened in the wake of abuses of power are unacceptable, the incidents which were the flash points for them happening are also unacceptable. In 1866 American statesman, abolitionist, social reformer, writer, and orator, Frederick Douglass, wrote in *The Atlantic*, “*The thing worse than rebellion is the thing that causes rebellion.*” His words are just as poignant 154 years later in 2020.

Repentance (*a change of mind/heart*) is a double-sided coin.. a two stage process. Turning away from a previous practice, paradigm or pattern is not enough. Repentance also calls us to turn toward a new way of being which, in turn, brings about a new world. In short, God not only calls us *out* of one way of living, but always *into* another way of being. Psychologists, pastors and sociologists would likely agree.. changing an ingrained pattern of behavior requires not only giving something up, but just as importantly, it requires replacing it with new and better practices... a new way to be human.

### Read

#### **Isaiah’s Vision of the Lord**

*“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” 8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” 9 And he said, “Go, and say to this people:*

*“ ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.””*

- Isaiah 6:1-10, ESV

### Reflect

- A) Has there ever been a time in your walk with the LORD that you’ve been surprised at His loving-kindness, mercy and grace when you’ve repented of, or relinquished something He convicted you about?

## Relationships, Race & The Coming Kingdom

- B) What did God's actions toward you reveal about His own character? What did His actions reveal about His heart for you and His belief in you?
- C) Finally, how does His calling on your life reveal His desire to do good through you to the world?

### Reframe

*"Righteous God, you who raise the poor from the dust and who lift the needy from the ash heap, you who watch over the stranger and give the desolate a home, you who are a father of orphans and a protector of widows, by your Spirit make us agents of your justice and instruments of your peace today. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Messiah who brings justice to victory. Amen."*

- Rev. Dr. W. David O. Taylor

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### **Renewing My Commitment [to Be An Ambassador of Reconciliation]**

*"When conflict happens, it's an opportunity to bring healing - and for God to be glorified."*

- David M. Bailey

### Rethink

When human beings attempt to 'better ourselves', due to our fallen nature, oftentimes it's at the expense of others. To operate with our own best interests at heart is our natural bent without the renewing work of God's Word and His Spirit in our hearts. This tendency, if unchecked, can even boastfully attempt to challenge God's rightful rule over His creation. We see this scenario throughout Scripture, and clearly demonstrated in the Genesis 11 Tower of Babel narrative. Those building the tower said, *"Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."* (vs. 4). It's no surprise that even our best motives can sour and turn inward *"unless the LORD builds the house."* (Psalm 127).

Even masterful attempts at unity in diversity can go askew if they're not founded on the character and nature of God, and all He's set into motion on our behalf. We know that, *"..God created man[kind] in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, every person, of every tribe, nation and tongue has intrinsic value, worth and dignity which no one can erase. And since Our Father is drawing all of humanity into one family through His Son Jesus Christ, He empowers us to live for the benefit and blessing of others, and our world, through His Word and Spirit within us.

We see a clear demonstration of this when the Church (God's family) was birthed in Acts 2. In the book of Revelation we see that when the Church reaches full maturity it's

## Relationships, Race & The Coming Kingdom

comprised of one people from “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev. 7:9b-10). This is true unity in diversity, and we’re invited to work toward that future reality now, in every sphere of our lives.

### Read

#### **The Coming of the Holy Spirit**

*“1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

*5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ..we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”*

- Acts 2:1-8, 11b-12, ESV

### Reflect

- A) Where there is strife and division in my own relationships, how can I invite the LORD who reconciles and redeems into those situations? Am I following His lead?
- B) When you’re made aware of injustices, oppression and hatred - wherever it exists - ask the Holy Spirit how you can follow His lead in these circumstances. How might this make a difference?
- C) Where and in what ways might Jesus be leading you to birth His Kingdom “*on earth as in Heaven*”? Are we inviting Him to do so? In what concrete ways can you and I serve as *agents of His love and truth in, and outside of, the Church*?

### Reframe

*“Oh Spirit of God, you who turned the chaos of Babel into the harmony of Pentecost, we pray that you would take the many discordant parts of Christ’s Body today and make them one, so that a watching world may see and believe in the One who holds all things together. Amen.”*

*“Spirit of the Living God, you who filled the first disciples with the life of Christ and set them aflame with the fire of God, we ask that you would fill us afresh with that same life and put a fire in our bones, so that we, in Jesus’ name, might preach good news to the*

## Relationships, Race & The Coming Kingdom

*poor, heal the broken-hearted, proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, and set the oppressed free. In Christ's name we pray. Amen."*

- Rev. Dr. W. David O. Taylor

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### Go Further

+ Pray through John 17:16-21, Romans 15:5-9a, and 1 John 1:1-2:1



+ **Repentance Project** / [repentanceproject.org](http://repentanceproject.org)

> "The Repentance Project exists to encourage racial healing by communicating the systemic legacies of slavery, building relationships, and creating opportunities—through formation, repentance, and repair—for a just future."



+ **Arrabon** / [arrabon.com](http://arrabon.com)

> The word arrabon means "a foretaste of what is to come". We believe the Church should be a foretaste of a reconciled heaven to our divided world. We exist to equip you and your community to effectively engage in the work of reconciliation.

### Notes & Attribution

\* 2 quotes above by David M. Bailey, Executive Director of Arrabon

\* 'Reframe' prayers, in order, all written by the Rev. Dr. W. David O. Taylor, Anglican priest and Assistant Professor of Theology and Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary

- 'A Pentecost Prayer for Those Who Don't Know What to Pray' at <http://artspastor.blogspot.com>
- 'Justice' from 'Open and Unafraid: A Set of Psalms Prayer Cards'
- 'A Pentecost Prayer for Unity' and 'A Pentecost Prayer for Mission' at <http://artspastor.blogspot.com>

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