

Pandemic of Injustice

New Normal: Church Renewal in Pandemic

2020-06-07 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on Ephesians 2:11-17; 5:13-16

10:00—Welcome, Tallgrass family!

- New Live Generously shirts...with soon-to-arrive Tallgrass hats...supporting our new Blessing Box initiative.
- Looking at the Boys & Girls Club on Tuesday!
- The Brubeck family has some sharing to do from the Tallgrass 24-Hour Prayer last Monday.
- Pray...

10:05—Welcome, Sprouts & Miss Elisha!

10:10—Mingle Question:

What's your story from the Tallgrass 24-Hour Prayer?

How'd you spend the hottest day of summer to date?

What strategies do you have to beat the heat?

10:15—New Normal: Church Renewal in Pandemic

- Dave had us take a few moments of silence to hear from God during his talk wrapping up Kingdom Friendships last Sunday. Here's what I wrote down from that time, "I long for Kingdom friendships where we go to battle together for things on King Jesus' heart."
- **Jeremiah 17:7-8** ⁷"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to **bear fruit.**"
- We've been asking God for church renewal. Well, here's our opportunity!
- My own journey with race
 - KCK experiences
 - ACMI Conference 2011 in Columbia, SC
 - Visiting church—comments about slavery from Paul's writing; one Black couple present; very uncomfortable
 - Touring the capital and saw the Confederate Flag flying proudly and it seemed super odd to me but normal to everyone else.
 - August 12, 2017—The events of Charlottesville, VA; photo of the young white man showing so much anger and hate on his face
 - I have to diversify my web of relationships if I want to be about what's on God's heart.
 - God has been answering my prayer as I've been taking steps, albeit slow steps.
 - I asked God to give me an older, Black friend who was a pastor... Next thing I know, I meet Pastor Lewis Smith of Manhattan First Free Methodist (thanks to Bill Bickmeier's push).
 - I also connected, or reconnected rather, with JahVelle Rhone, one of the pastors at Manhattan Christian Fellowship.
 - SBC slowness to condemn

- How do these questions hit you, “Are you a racist? Are you racist? Do you ever do racist things or think racist thoughts?”
- We quickly admit imperfection in most areas of life but just as quickly defend ourselves insisting that we aren’t racist.
 - How’s your prayer life? Pretty rough.
 - How’s your time in the Word? Ok, but definitely could be better.
 - Have you struggled with lust? Yeah, don’t we all.
 - What about anger? Definitely still wrestle with anger...but I’m getting better.
 - What about racism? Nope! No way!
- Our defense mechanisms
 - “Yes, but All Lives Matter” Yes, but we’re talking about a specific issue here. Broken leg illustration from Facebook.
 - Is not now the time to march for the unborn? Good question, but why deflect from THIS issue of black lives? Let’s address all issues of injustice!
 - “Racism isn’t a big deal in our country...” all the while knowing and even defending grandma or grandpa’s or mom or dad’s racist comments. Where did those comments come from? They came from racism...and not that long ago, in fact, from racism that still exists today.
 - I’ve been hearing the stories of my Black friends and those I went to high school with. Just because you don’t have any stories witnessing racism doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. I think about just how many secrets people carry around with them their whole lives that never get brought into the light.
 - In our Pure Desire group, a group helping men with sex and porn addiction, dark secrets are being brought into the light and at times they are shocking at first, but then, when exposed to the light and healing begins to occur and true freedom is tasted, it’s totally worth the hard work of looking at our hearts and wanting more for ourselves and those around us. We serve an incredibly big and powerful, merciful and gracious God who wants so much more for you and for us than we are currently experiencing.
 - BTW, Dave is speaking on sexuality next week. So keep that in mind, parents!
- One of the most beautiful moments in our church, if not the most beautiful moment, was Bill and Naemi Bickmeier’s wedding. We all loved it because it was a vision of what could be, the beauty that could be in the church, full of diversity. We tasted Revelation 7 and want more of that here and now, not just when Christ returns but now. We want to work towards that beautiful display of the Body of Christ...*here and now*.
 - **Revelation 7:9-10** ⁹After this I looked, and behold, 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, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”
- #irunwithmaud
- George Floyd’s murder and subsequent protests
- Last Friday, I saw Lewis Smith on Facebook Live, protesting in Junction City, so Maris and I got in the car.
- Then Friday night I saw JahVelle’s post about a protest at Triangle Park last Saturday, so we showed up.
- Then we saw the events organizing for Tuesday night, so we showed up again.
 - We marched down Anderson Ave from Triangle Park to Juliette and back with 2000 others in our community, including other white and black pastors.
 - I’ve been praying for these relationships. I’ve got to stand by my brothers in this moment.
 - Rural America should rise up and lead the charge for justice. Midwest nice isn’t enough.
 - Tallgrass can and should be a light on the hill in a dark world. We can be yeast that leavens the whole. We can be a mustard seed that grows to be healthy tree that bears fruit no matter what the season.
- Be careful what you pray for, because God just might answer your prayers. So let’s pray.

PRAY!!!

Jeremiah 17:7-8 ⁷“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to *bear fruit*.”

Go to PowerPoint.

New Normal: Church Renewal in Pandemic Pandemic of Injustice

These are current pandemics that have been happening long before COVID-19 became our reality.

1. Racism 2. Human Trafficking 3. Abortion

Human Justice Reformation: A 21st Century Renewal

1. Remembering 2. Reckoning 3. Reforming

Jemar Tisby, *A Racial Reformation in the 21st Century* from the *Pass the Mic* Podcast (A Witness Podcast) on May 31, 2020

1. Remembering/Reminding

- If the foundational verse for the Protestant Reformation was Ephesians 2:8, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...*, then the foundational passage for the Human Justice Reformation in the 21st Century is Genesis 1:26-27.
- **Genesis 1:26-27** ²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”
²⁷So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
- Image of God
 - PhD or GED; Famous or Infamous; Black or White; Male or Female; Old or Young; Incarcerated or Free; Born or Unborn
 - The Image of God is not just one person. It’s the union of man and woman when it’s just Adam and Eve. It’s the whole human race!
- **Ephesians 2:11-12** ¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
- **James 1:27** Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
 - In other words, #orphanlivesmatter #widowlivesmatter
 - Modern paraphrase: #blacklivesmatter #unbornlivesmatter #traffickedlivesmatter

2. Reckoning

- Dealing with a racist past
- 1619 Project, in addition to or rather than 1776
- In "An act declaring that baptisme of slaves doth not exempt them from bondage," passed by the General Assembly in the session of September 1667, Virginia's colonial government, composed of White Anglican men, attempted to better define the conditions by which people were enslaved or free.
- WHEREAS some doubts have risen whether children that are slaves by birth, and by the charity and piety of their owners made pertakers of the blessed sacrament of baptisme, should be vertue of their baptisme be made ffree; *It is enacted and declared by this grand assembly, and the authority thereof*, that the conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or ffreedom; that diverse masters, ffreed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavor the propagation of christianity by permitting children, though slaves, or those of greater growth if capable to be admitted to that sacrament.
- Translation: "God can have your souls, but we keep your bodies."
- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) had a moderate view of slavery, meaning he believed black people had a soul. <https://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/jonathan-edwards>
- Fast forward to 1845—Southern Baptists split away over the issue of whether or not a missionary could have his slaves.
 - The church was split on this issue before the nation was...literally.
- Then, the Emancipation Proclamation, celebrated now on Juneteenth, June 19th, coming right up!
 - From Wikipedia: The **Emancipation Proclamation** was a presidential proclamation and executive order issued by United States President Abraham Lincoln on September 22, 1862, and effective as of January 1, 1863. It changed the legal status under federal law of more than 3.5 million enslaved African Americans in the Confederate states from slave to free.
 - From Wikipedia: Juneteenth is an American holiday celebrated on June 19. On June 19, 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation— which had been issued on January 1, 1863— was read to enslaved African-Americans in Texas by Gordon Granger. Texas was the last Confederate State to have the proclamation announced, after the end of the American Civil War in April of that year. Texas was the most remote of the slave states, and minimal fighting meant there were few Union troops present to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation until after the war ended.
- Billy Graham
 - Pietistic vs. Activistic—They're not mutually exclusive although they're often portrayed to be that way in the white evangelical church. Your faith should just be about you, your soul, and Jesus, not making real changes here and now. So heavenly minded that you're no earthly good.
 - Individualistic vs. Institutional
 - It's easy to have that theological view when you're in the position of majority and the privilege that comes with that.
 - Billy Graham and others have led the charge in the white evangelical church as the White Moderates. "Just stay focused on the Gospel, that the blood of Christ delivers you from the fires of hell and don't dabble too much with institutional issues."
 - "First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council-er or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action;' who paternalistically feels he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season.' Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection." —Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail (April 16, 1963)*

- What about your own story and journey with race? Are you proactive in addressing injustice when you see it? Are you proactive in looking for injustice? Or are you thankfully ignorant? Or blissfully busy? Or do you have bigger fish to fry?
- Will you allow God to stoke a fire in your belly for what He's fired up about in our world?
- Will you deal with all of your cynicism and skepticism and ask God what He thinks and how He wants to lead you and lead us?
- JahVelle's stories

3. Reforming/Renewing

- Always reforming
- Moving towards justice takes more than words, it takes deeds. It takes more than intentions, it takes actions.
- **Ephesians 5:13-16** ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." ¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.
 - Act now! George Floyd, the unborn, those in sex slavery.... The days are evil! Redeem the time! Don't waste it!
- Now is the time to act! Not wait! **Proverbs 3:27-28** ²⁷ Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. ²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you.
- It is vital that you are walking in the Spirit!
 - You live by the Spirit, now walk in the Spirit.
- **James 2:14-17** ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
- **Galatians 5:13-16** ¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
- **Galatians 5:25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.
- Good intentions must move to sustained action.
- **James 4:17** So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
- **1 John 3:18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

1. Redeemer

- **Ephesians 2:13-17** ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.
- Woman caught in adultery—Jesus stops the murder (John 8)
- The persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8—And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect

man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

- This was about social justice! Just a few verses later, Jesus is advocating for the children to have access to faith by welcoming them into His arms. This cost Jesus dearly in public perception at the time. We think it’s cool now looking back but would we have tried to stop Jesus from His fight for social justice in the moment?
- The Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28—²¹ And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” ²³ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” ²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶ And he answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷ She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Pray

Stop PowerPoint.

Pray through the Lord’s Prayer together!

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our sins, as we ourselves forgive everyone who sins against us.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

11:00—After Party

1. What is God stirring in your heart?
2. What do you need to repent of?
3. What is your next Spirit-led action step?

Ideas:

- Consistent pro-life ethic
- Starfish YouTube video
- Preemptive Love Podcast
- We can address institutional issues through the political process more than previous systems.
- Axios news
- Sermon series on how to think and engage
 - Quick to listen, slow to speak.
 - Discernment

The Chopping Block:

Ideas:

- Lamentations 5 Prayer or Habakkuk Prayer or Lord's Prayer
- Kingdom Friendships
 - MLK Jr. and his crew
 - William Wilburforce and his crew
- Dissonances
 - We defend and overlook the offenses of our parents and grandparents while claiming to not see racism in our country. What?
 - Huge disparity between wealthy and poor. Even huger disparity between wealthy and super wealthy.
 - Modern day slavery—can't stop working. Working hours are longest among the wealthiest.
 - White privilege and yet great anxiety and depression.
- Jew and Gentile complexities
 - Religious oppression one way
 - Physical and economic oppression the other way
- White fragility—victim mentality
- Justice—disadvantage yourself for the advantage of others.
 - Give up sleep, free time, money, emotional energy
- Retributive AND Restorative Justice
- Mental toughness—grit, moxie
- The Quartet of the Vulnerable
- The Beatitudes—Blessed are the...poor in spirit...those who mourn...the meek...those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...the merciful...the pure in heart...the peacemakers... (Matthew 5:3-12)
- "I don't see color." vs. "I see beauty!" There's so much beauty in diversity.
- "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." —Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*
- I don't really want to have to spend much time convincing people that there's an issue here. I'd like to spend time getting to work together, getting to work in our own hearts, in our own church, and in our own city.
- Diversity, Beauty, Enrichment, Mutual Edification
- *We Gon' Be Alright* by Tye Tribbett
- 75 year old white man shoved to ground and stepped over