



Social Justice Sunday Resources June 18, 2023

THEME: Race as it relates to freedom

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Acts 10:9-48

³⁴ . . . *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism"* (NIV)

Act 17:22-34

²⁶ *"From one person God made all nations who live on earth, and he decided when and where every nation would be."* (CEV)

Galatians 3:19-4:7

The Apostle Paul would declare the abolition of discrimination when he writes,

²⁶⁻²⁸ *"All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus. And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes. Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman."* (CEV)

SONG SUGGESTIONS

Note: All song selections are taken from the *Voices Together* (VT) and *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (HWB) hymnals.

African American Heritage

Every Time I Feel the Spirit	VT 681
Guide My Feet	VT 816 (HWB 546)
Hallelujah, Salvation, and Glory	VT 69
I Want Jesus to Walk With Me	VT 306 (HWB 439)
Lift Every Voice and Sing	VT 611 (HWB 579)
Soon and Very Soon	VT 669 (HWB 611)
We Shall Overcome	VT 803
We've Come This Far by Faith	VT 599

Racial Justice

Christ is Alive! Let Christians Sing	VT 359 (HWB 278)
Creating God, Your Fingers Trace	VT 427 (HWB 325)
For the Healing of the Nations	VT 705 (HWB 367)
How Can I Say	VT 388
Jesus Calls Us	VT 30

SERMON STARTERS

1) Embracing 'the Other' – it is a God Thing!

In Acts 10:9-48 Peter should not have been surprised that God revealed to him that **in Jesus Christ the barrier between Jews and Gentiles was broken down.**

- ❖ ³⁴ . . . *“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism”* (NIV)
- ❖ ³⁴ . . . *“I truly understand that God shows no partiality”* (NRSV)
- ❖ ³⁴ . . . *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons”* (KJV)

Early in the Old Testament record of covenant(s), God demonstrated that **the work of the Holy Spirit is no respecter of persons.**

Gen. 16:1 – introduces Hagar, an Egyptian slave girl.

- ❖ **Hagar is the first woman**, and one of only a few women to receive an independent vision/word from the Lord [in line with Rebekah (Gen. 25:22), the unnamed mother of Samson (Judges 13:3-7), and Mary (Luke 1:26-38)]
- ❖ In v. 10 the angel of the Lord says to Hagar, *“I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude”* (NRSV), which compares to the promise that Abram received (see both Gen. 13:16 and 15:5)

2) Centered on shalom, working out in love

(From Osheta Moore: writer, pastor, speaker, and podcaster. For more background information, see her website: osheta.com.)

I Cor. 13:1-3 Paul on the **centrality of agape love.**

Theme: Center the holy quest for God’s full-orbed peace and justice with the confession of love for self, for the other, and for our shared community.

- ❖ **Seek peace that fully heals. Start from shalom**, “. . . the Hebraic concept of peace that is active and responsive, a peace that challenges but comforts at the same time, a peace that binds up wounds and builds true unity. Shalom is God’s dream for the world as it should be, nothing broken, nothing missing, everything made whole. Shalom is what happens when we partner with God to create healing and wholeness right in our midst. Shalom as I’ve learned is all about love. God’s love made manifest in this world full of conflict.”
- ❖ **Declare God’s love.** Work out your approach to anti-racism in a way that is, as Moore says, “rooted in love — love for Jesus who modeled shalom and love for my BIPOC and White siblings. When I practice/teach anti-racism, my goals are to own my Belovedness, proclaim yours, and build the Beloved Community.” [Emphasis added for clarity of the three distinct areas of growth.]
- ❖ **Work out the I-you-we love of God in real life.** To “write, teach, have a meeting about, or even study anti-racism,” keep foremost this core understanding: “I am Beloved. You are Beloved. We are Beloved.” How can these understandings draw us from comfort and complacency to relational courage and new convictions?

The Christ-follower who does this honestly, openly, and with integrity — centered on the hope and grace of Jesus — will heed Paul’s profound warning for proclaimers of righteousness from [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#).

3) Repent, confess, produce good fruit in the straight path of Jesus

(Use of this passage inspired by Pastor Chad Miller, Ridgeway Mennonite Church of Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 15, 2023.)

[Matt. 3:1-10 NIV](#) The opening of the ministry of John the Baptist

Key lines (full text below):

Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.

Confessing their sins, they were baptized...

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

...every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

- ❖ **Revival** leads to new ways of living (transformation) when the Spirit works in the life of honest people who see themselves with the eyes of God. How is God asking us to see ourselves within the Christian community... where our sisters and brothers of color ask us plainly: are you ready to learn with us what racial justice looks like?
- ❖ **Repentance.** John, in this passage, doesn't have to do any explaining about sin. People were coming under conviction because the Spirit was at work throughout the land. John was catalyst and priest, ministering God's saving grace upon confession of what was not godly.
- ❖ **New life.** John was also a forthtelling prophet, speaking in galvanizing love to those denying their need and trusting in their status. "Bear fruit worthy of repentance," (NRSV) he tells them — asking them to imagine a new life in God if they can get over themselves to walk the road of racial justice healing.

4) Show up. Grab your corner. Never, ever, let go.

(Inspired by the Rev. Dr. Vincent Walter Jones, pastor of the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Bedford, Va., preaching Jan. 16, 2023, at Eastern Mennonite University.)

[Luke 5:17-25](#) Jesus Heals a Man Let Down through the Roof of a House

Theme: To partner with Jesus to bring about complete racial healing, you have to be present where the need demands action, do your part, and do not let go before God's work is done.

- ❖ **Show up.** Look for the "beloved community" throughout the Bible story. Here we find it in the four who decided to show their love for another who could not help himself. They showed up in love at the right time to work at getting their friend to the right place for Jesus to do what only Jesus could do.
- ❖ **Do your part.** It took all four to lift a motionless man on a bed. They were not daunted when they realized their good intention had to be disruptive to break through the crowd — and then the roof — to get their crippled friend in front of Jesus.
- ❖ **Don't quit.** Because of their faithful work to allow Jesus to minister to the need of their friend, Jesus does a miracle of grace to give inner healing. Because of the un-faith of the religious leaders who doubted that Jesus can really act as God to redeem human brokenness, Jesus gives the visible outer healing.

Racism in our communities, our nation, and our churches is a sin and a sickness. It cripples the people and groups where it continues hidden from the inward and outward healing touch of Jesus. Bringing it to the powerful cross of Jesus requires faithful and determined souls with hearts of love on fire for God's healing and justice.

Children's Story

Find books to use for a children's lesson here:

<https://kbinbloom.com/childrens-books-about-juneteenth/>

Additional resources

- ❖ *23 Ways to Thoughtfully Celebrate Juneteenth (2023)*
<https://www.goodgoodgood.co/articles/how-to-celebrate-juneteenth>

- ❖ [**Ohio Conference's Racial Reconciliation Team Grace & Groundings Resource List**](#)