**Reflections on Racial Justice Sunday by Godfrey Kesari**

Dr Godfrey Kesari has written a series of reflections as a resource for use in churches as a discussion ahead of Racial Justice Sunday 13th February 2020 or for discussion at future gatherings.

Why Bother? Because we can do something about it. Racial injustice has been a perennial problem not only in the UK but in many other countries. Millions and millions of people have experienced racial injustice throughout centuries. Sadly, the discrimination on the ground of race continues. People of different colours and features have suffered the scourge of racism in all spheres of life. In today’s world of instant communication, we hear daily reports of racial prejudice and racially motivated attacks; we feel overwhelmed and helpless. Nonetheless, we can do something about it. We can actively participate in social justice campaigns on a personal and a societal level. Making close friends with people of all races (particularly from minority ethnic groups) will certainly go some way towards bringing about racial justice. As people of God, we must be the first to affirm our common humanity; it becomes a moral obligation for us to engage in the lifelong practice of racial transformation for our communities.

Why Bother? Because we can teach, preach and educate people about it. All types of racism are learned, and it follows that they can be unlearned; a proposition that holds out the promise of the emergence of a society free from racism. As we approach the Racial Justice week (7th – 13th February), it will be right to teach and educate that there is no need whatsoever to hate another person because of their colour, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, caste or creed. As Graham Greene puts it, ‘hatred is a failure of imagination.’ We, the Christians, must learn to imagine ourselves in the place of fellow passengers in the journey of life.

Why Bother? Because we are not strangers but brothers and sisters in Christ. Racism is a universal problem; it seems to exist everywhere – it is ubiquitous. One simple truth we all should recognise is that it is God who chooses the place and purpose of His calling. God called Abraham to leave his country, Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) and asked him to an alien land - Canaan (modern day Palestine) - and he went in obedience to Him (Genesis 12). Perhaps he found himself among the ethnic minority in his new home country. But then he might have found great solace in the fact that God who called him was with him. In the days following the Resurrection, the disciples of Jesus went to different countries to preach the gospel. Probably they too might have been amongst the ethnic minorities. The presence of God with them might have helped them to surmount the difficulties. Jesus Himself, although a Jew, crossed boundaries to interact with the Samaritans and the Canaanites and others. This shows God’s transcendental and enduring love for people of all shapes, sizes, colour, nationalities and interests.

Why Bother? Because the church is for everyone. No doubt, the body of Christ – the Church has a vital role in upholding the dignity of everyone to create a more racially just world. It is further validated by the fact that all humans are descendants from Adam and Eve created in the image of God. There is no reason why masses of people should be pigeonholed as ‘us-and-them’ when they are all the same under the skin. Many of the problems confronting today’s world can be traced to race. They can be solved if we succeed in disabusing people of race being seen as a centre of devotion.

It may interest you to know that decades ago Gandhi was not allowed to enter a western church solely because of the colour of his skin. I sometimes wonder what impact Gandhi – one of the greatest moral teachers of the 20th century - would have made in India if he were allowed entry into that church. At this point in time, we can only seek God’s mercy and pray to Him to lead us in the right path. We have come a long way but there is still much more work to do.

At church, we not only derive a new strength in Christ, but also realise our need for being with one another to be the church. Thus, Jesus prays, “… that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” (John 17. 21) Race Equality will only be achieved when we all play a part. May we unite in prayer and action in the forthcoming Racial Justice Week to challenge race inequality across the UK and the rest of the world.

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