



Imago Dei
Part 2 – Every Nation, Tribe, and Tongue
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I love that last clip in that trailer that shows your fingerprint. Have you ever looked at your fingerprint. Go ahead and look at it right now. It's crazy. Some of you already know this, but there is not one fingerprint in this entire world that is the same. Isn't that crazy? Biological twins have different fingerprints. And there have been billions and billions of people on this earth. As a matter of fact, did you know there are three different types of fingerprints. There is what they call the whirl, the loop, and the arch. So, you either have a fingerprint that would be categorized as a whirl, a loop, or an arch. And then within that, they take the center and the delta and that's how they use fingerprints.

Now, if your fingerprint has never been associated with a picture – you've never taken it for a job or a background check or anything – and they have your fingerprints from a crime scene or anything else, they would not be able to know the color of your skin by your fingerprint. Let me tell you why that's really cool. It's because our God created our fingerprints. Psalm 139 says that he created us together in our mother's womb, so our fingerprint, our identity, has nothing to do with the color of our skin.

Today, we're going to talk about racism and how it fits into imago Dei. Before we do, I want to open up with a story about Abraham Lincoln, who was amazing, right? Abraham Lincoln was an abolitionist; he put an end to slavery. But you guys also need to know Abraham Lincoln wasn't perfect. He still didn't think blacks should vote, which is an atrocity. But he was progressive for his time, and he was fighting, trying to do the right thing because he was a biblical man, a moral man, and he was trying to do those things, so he fought for abolition.

During the civil war, history records that Abraham Lincoln would go to church on Wednesday nights. As a matter of fact, he would go to Dr. Gurley's church. It was about a stone's throw away from the White House, about a block's walk. He would go with his assistant. Dr. Gurley would allow Abraham Lincoln to sit in his pastor quarters so he wouldn't be bugged by patrons, and he could just slip in and slip out.

On one particular Wednesday church service, he's walking back with his assistant after listening to Dr. Gurley give his message. The assistant says, "Man, that was great! Wasn't that a great message? What do you think, sir president? Do you think that was a great message?"

Abraham Lincoln goes, "Well, it was biblical, it was relevant, and it was precise, but I don't think it was great.

The assistant goes, "Why don't you think it was great? I thought it was great?"

Abraham Lincoln says, "It's because Dr. Gurley never challenged us to do something great." And I think for a message to be great, you need to be challenged."

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I don't know if this message is going to be great, but I assure you I'm going to challenge you this morning with love, love from scripture, love from the gospel, and love from what God's Word says. Because here's the reality. If you don't think I've been nervous and anxious about this message maybe more than any other I've given at Woodland Hills, you're crazy. I text Ted right before this and said, "Ted, I'm nervous." He goes, "It's okay."

Just pray for me. Y'all, I'm 30 miles north of a billboard that says, whiteprideradio.com. So, I'm very aware of where I am, as far as geography in this country. So, of course I'm nervous talking to Southwest Missouri about racism. I grew up in southern California, Chula Vista to be exact. Low-income housing. So, my whereabouts... California is way more progressive than Southwest Missouri. No offense to my fisherman and hunting friends. It wasn't until I got here in Missouri and then Hurricane Katrina hit and displaced two great friends of mine, Rodney and Jerod Evans, who come to live with their Uncle Eddie, who was in the Platters.

I started spending a lot of time with these young African males. I started seeing things and experiencing things, being so close to them, I never experienced in California. Like seeing the way people treated them and the way people talked to them. And now I'm watching Jerod be a phenomenal dad, a phenomenal husband, with his kid's changing everything in a bi-racial relationship. It's amazing. I get to watch that first hand and see him break so many barriers. He's coaching my kid right now and he's doing a phenomenal job. He's loving his wife, he's loving his kids; he's amazing.

There's an old saying that when you walk long enough with the Rabbi, you'll get his dust on your clothes if you're walking close enough. But sometimes we can't have empathy towards other people because we don't walk close enough, long enough with them. Perhaps Ted asked me to give this message because he knows I'm walking closer to those who don't look like me and aren't from where I'm from on a more consistent basis.

So, we get into this message, *Every Nation, Tribe, and Tongue*, and we take from Revelation 7: 9. **After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count...** So, this is greater than Woodstock. There are like people going on forever. There's just tons and tons of people. **...from every nation, tribe, people and language.** I got caught up on the tongues part this week. Has it ever occurred to you that when we go to heaven, we might not be speaking English? As a matter of fact, when you look at the Bible, it's Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic. It may be, as Dr. Brawner referred to after this last service, it may be a language that has never even existed, so we're just given it. "Forget Rosetta Stone. Here's you go, here's a language. You already know it. You got it."

Here's the other part about this tongue that I think is so important. Do you know why foreign countries have such a problem with us as Americans? I have friends from other foreign countries, and they tell me this. It's because we go into other countries, and we expect them to speak our language. The French can't stand us. You go over there, and you start speaking English... You're in France. You aren't okay with people coming over here and expecting you to speak their language. You want to know a really big

travel tip when you go to France? Put a Canadian patch on your backpack and then you'll be treated much differently in France. Why? Canada has French speaking provinces. For the most part, Americans go to all these foreign countries and assume they need to speak our language. It's just prideful and arrogant. Who decided that America is a one language speaking country? It doesn't have to be. We are all immigrants if you think about it, other than the native Americans. So, allow immigrants to speak their language, whether it be Spanish or whatever language it may be. Be sensitive to that. Be considerate of that. Just because we have movies doesn't mean they all know English. "Oh, you watch our movies; you should speak English." No. Subtitles. Right? So, just be thoughtful and mindful of that.

There's this idea of these tribes and nations before the throne and before the Lamb. John is painting this picture of heaven. That's what Revelation is. It was written by the Apostle John and he's writing one of the final prophecies. By the way, there is no "S" on the end of Revelation. It's never the Book of Revelations; it's the Book of Revelation. Singular. It was a Revelation that God gave to John about what heaven was going to be like.

All these people are celebrating. **...standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.** Palm branches were also in their hands when Jesus came in on the donkey on the triumphal entry. Hosanna, hosanna. Easter is coming, right? In a couple of months, we'll be in Easter. It's coming back to it again. They are praising the King. Here they are praising Jesus but think about it. Those same people that were yelling "Hosanna, Hosanna" when he was coming into Jerusalem, were the same people, three days later, that were yelling, "Crucify him, Crucify him!" But now there is no more three days later after this palm branch ceremony because it's final. The King has destroyed the devil, everything has been determined, and here we are. So, what we need to know from this passage and how it relates to racism is this is all redeemed. So, every Nation, tongue, and tribe is going to come back together. Black, yellow, white... they are all going to come together.

So, if that's the case, heaven is diverse. So why do you think that you or I will enjoy heaven if for eternity we are going to be next to black people, white people, yellow people, different nationalities, different ethnicities for eternity, praising Jesus, not in our English tongue perhaps, when we don't enjoy being around those people now. That's all heaven is. Heaven is a beautiful mosaic of people that don't look like you, act like you, talk like you. Jesus prays, "Your will on earth as it is in heaven." Heaven is diverse.

So, I just have a question in the most loving way. How diverse is your life? How diverse is your home? Who do you invite inside that home? Who do you allow to be inside your circle? Who do you allow your kids to be around? "I'm not a racist." Really? Would you let your granddaughter or your daughter marry a black man? Then we can say there is no racism there. It has subtle ways of seeping itself into our lives where we think we're not racist; "I just don't want my kid hanging out with them." Are you kidding me? My boys are best friends with kids that don't look like them, act like them, or talk like them. It's intentional with that too.

So, heaven is diverse, Revelation shows us what's redeemed because this is what was broken. God's heart was never for us to be scattered. God never wanted any of us to be scattered. He didn't want us to be broken and divided.

Genesis 11: 8-9 - ***8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth...*** While they were trying to build a tower to God. They we're so filled up with pride. Pride gets us into a lot of... As a matter of fact, racism is born out of pride, right? ...***and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.***

So, this idea of people that came together... Remember, God's original plan was for one nation. He created Adam and Eve and then from that came Cain and Abel. Cain kills his brother, he gets sent out. Now we're starting to get different tribes because of the result of sin. We were all supposed to be together. We were all supposed to be united from the forefront. Then they get scattered and they get scattered more and they say, "Hey, let's build this." They do it again; they try to build a big tower to God. God scatters them again. He says, "I'm going to confuse your language and I'm going to scatter you because of your pride." It's always rooted in pride.

William Barclay says it best. *"Pride is the fertile soil from which all other sins grow."*

For us to have the audacity to think that the color of our skin is more significant than others comes straight from the pit of hell. It's pride that got Lucifer kicked out of heaven. It's pride that got Adam and Eve in trouble to begin with. It's pride that got us the Tower of Babel to get us all scattered. Pride is the inability to forgive somebody. Pride is the inability to lay your racism aside. Pride is the fertile soil from which all other sins grow.

Pride is what made World War II happen. This man named Adolf Hitler thought that there was a superior race. How did that go millions of lives later? That literally changed the trajectory of family trees and everything else. People in this room were impacted by World War II. People in this room that don't have their great grandfathers and their grandfathers because one man thought a race was more superior than another.

Now, hear me. Satan knows this. Satan knows how to attack us. As a matter of fact, back to Abraham Lincoln, he had a great quote. He said, "If America is ever destroyed, it won't be from outside; it will be from being divided from within." So, Satan is using media to divide you politically. Satan is using media to divide you racially. Satan is using media to divide you in whatever way he can because the only way this great country that God has blessed is destroyed is from within. So, if you walk around and you've got racism in your heart, just know that Satan is winning the day. Satan is winning the day of division when you look at somebody differently because of the color of their skin.

Look at this in Romans 10: 12. ***12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile...*** Just so you know, there are only two races that God created. There was Jew – God's chosen people – and Gentile. The Jews blew it and God graphs in the gentiles and they get to be a part of the party too. And the crazy thing is, we are going to find out, and in between those two races, he abolishes those. "No, no, back to

the fingerprint, I want the heart. I'm not worried about the color of your skin, I want the heart." There is no difference between Jew and Gentile —***the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him...*** There is no partiality with God. God is impartial. The more we follow God, the more impartial we'll become too.

You can't come to know Jesus in 2000, 2003, 2004 and you're the same racist now that you were then. That's not the heart of God. When you come to know Jesus, you begin to have a deeper and deeper knowledge of God's holiness – the cross with its grace and mercy in your life – but you also become more aware of you knowledge and sinfulness. How great is God's grace and mercy that when we come to know him, when we trust that he died on the cross for our sins, that he was buried, resurrected, and that we trust in him and believe he did those things that we will be saved, how great is it that at that moment of salvation that he doesn't show us all of our sin at once.

What a merciful and graceful God. The more we walk with him, the more he sanctifies things out of us. I'm here to tell you he keeps doing it because if we don't understand... We can't keep pursuing things the devil desires for us and keep having a heart for Christ. The two can't coexist. You can't be growing in your relationship and have a heart for Christ and a heart for racism at the same time. Those two cannot coexist. As a matter of fact, in Ephesians 2, it says this, ***14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...*** So, he is saying Christ came and he destroyed there being a Jew and Gentile. Now, there are just those who believe in Jesus. So, a heart for racism and a heart for Christ cannot coexist.

There was a man named William Wilberforce. William Wilberforce fought to put an end to the Transatlantic Slave Trade Movement, which was taking all the Africans from Africa, through Europe and then over to here, and making a lot of money. A lot of people didn't want him to do that because they were making a lot of money. They were worried about the dollar more than they were about treating men equally. The song, *Amazing Grace*, was coined from John Newton who was like a mentor and a pastor to William Wilberforce, who was a political activist that abolished the Transatlantic Slave Trade Movement. He was a Christian. He understood that God's Word had no room for racism in it. He understood where his conviction lay. He followed God's Word and wanted to treat all men equally and he spent his life and his energy putting an end to the Transatlantic Slave Trade Movement.

It's not about if you are a business owner or a pastor. It's not about if you are a coach or in the ministry. You do both. When you are a Christian, you do the work of a political activist. When you're a Christian, you do the word of Christ. You do both. Think about this. A week from tomorrow, we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in this country, he was a Christian. If you are a business owner or you're in this community and we don't acknowledge that day... Why? He was a believer. Forget the color of his skin. He was a believer. He loved Jesus. He fought for the ideas of this Bible. The most important thing.... I love the way that Denis Leary says it. *"Racism isn't born, folks, it's taught. I have a two-year-old. You know what he hates? Naps! End of list!"*

And it happens in subtle ways. Your uncle, your great grandfather, they make racial slurs at the television as you're watching football today, yelling RUN! It's not just *run*, but you put an explicit term there and the little kid hears you use that term, or you say funny facial jokes around the table. That stuff

is taught. And if you're in a home where you're not teaching it it's normal for your kid to have friends who aren't the same skin color as them, that's normal. You decide to create what is normal. It's taught, ladies and gentlemen. It's taught from great grandfathers, it's taught from grandfathers, it's carried on. It's taught.

No kids comes out of the womb hating somebody else. Have you ever seen kids on a playground play? They don't think twice about it, ladies and gentlemen. They don't have a second thought about it. It's us as parents that get to lead the way in this unity and the beauty and diversity.

I love this John Piper quote. He says this, *"The only solution powerful enough to overcome the racial strife and bring about racial reconciliation and harmony is the gospel of Jesus Christ."*

A president of the United States isn't going to change the race problem. Boycotts aren't going to change the race problem. It's our heart living out the gospel, which is free from racism. Jesus hates racism. He proves it. I'm going to show you a point here in just a second. But it's the gospel – sharing and living out the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the only thing powerful enough to abolish this division that Satan is using in our country through media to try to divide us.

John Calvin says, *"The great part of the human race are most unworthy if they be judged by their own merit."* That's all of us. We are all unworthy, regardless of the color of our skin. *"But here scripture helps us in the best way when it teaches that we are not to consider what men merit of them selves but to look upon the image of God (imago Dei) in all men, to which we owe all honor and love."*

"Therefore, whatever man you meet who needs your aid, you have no reason to refuse to help him. We remember not to consider men's evil intention but to look upon the image of God (imago Dei) in them, which cancels and effaces their transgressions, and, with its beauty and dignity, allures us to love and embrace them"

Sometimes, we'll try to be anti-racist and try to do our best to act like we're not and we'll say things, not intentionally, but we'll say things like, "I don't see color." You all see color or else you would have gotten in a wreck at a stoplight this morning. We do see color, and it's beautiful. I see my beautiful black brothers and sisters. I see my beautiful Asian friends. I do see color and it's beautiful because that is exactly how God created them. So don't say you don't see color because you do. And God created them that way and they're beautiful that way. And you're beautiful in your white skin and they are beautiful in their black skin. We are all beautiful. God intentionally did that. So, when we say that, we're saying, "I don't see the image of God in you." Because God is the creator and God has a heartbeat for diversity, but he has a heartbeat for unity in that diversity.

Let's go to Acts 17: 26 - **26 From one man he made all the nations...** So, we're all brothers and sisters, especially in Christ, right? **...that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.** God did this. Everybody came from one man. Here is what's amazing about Jesus. Jesus knows how to poke the bear, and so does Satan. They both know how to poke the bear. Jesus did it in a non-sinful way. Satan does it in a sinful way. So, this is the way Jesus would poke the bear. The Jews hated the Samaritans. Jesus was a Jew, but he was

teaching them. There is a parable of the good Samaritan. He's poking the bear. He's like, "You don't like this group but watch who is good in this story. You're choosing not to see the good in them, but there is actually good in them; you are just refusing to see what you don't want to see rather than what's actually in all men that have a heart for God.

Then Jesus pokes the bear another way. This wasn't a parable, this was a true story. Jesus reveals himself for the first time to the woman at the well, who was a Samaritan. He reveals who he was to her the first time. For the first time, other than the apostles, he reveals himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman. And he gets to her, and he talks about the heart.

I love that scene of these apostles walking up to Jesus. "Why are you talking to her?" Jesus is like, "Have you missed all this? It's all about the heart. It's not about the color of somebody's skin." I love that that's who he revealed himself to first – a woman who was at the well in the middle of the day because she was outcast from her own Samaritans.

You many have heard this story before, but I'm going to change the characters for you. What's it going to be like one day when you and I die? We're all doing to die. And when we make it into heaven, and these angels come and grab you and usher you to your seat... And you sit down at this Marriage Supper of the Lamb that we're heard all about. You look to your left and there's this table that just goes on forever. And it also goes on forever to your right. At one point in their life, these believers were on fire for Jesus. It's a special, huge Marriage Supper of the Lamb to celebrate who Jesus is, what he is and what he's done. You sit down and it's so special. You look to your left and sitting right next to you is this Middle Eastern Man.

You look at him and you say, "Excuse me, Sir, what is your name?"

He says, "Raheem."

You say, "Raheem, will you talk to me about how you got here?"

He says, "I grew up in Afghanistan, In Afghanistan, I grew up a Muslim. Then I started having these crazy dreams. These dreams of a Middle Eastern man with a beard, who told me he was the way, the truth, and the life and that no one could come to the Father except through him. I couldn't shake these dreams, so I knew Jesus was the way. So, I renounced Islam and decided to follow Jesus. When the Taliban found out about it, they came and pulled me from my home. They told me to recant my faith in Jesus. If I did not, I would be beheaded. I was beheaded that day. The angels came and ushered me in. I got my head back. Isn't this so special?"

You say, "Raheem, thank you so much for sharing your story."

Then you look over to your right and there is this olive skinned, beautiful 11 year old girl with blue eyes from Italy, outside the province of Rome...

You say, "Little girl, what's your name?"

She looks at you and says, "Francesca."

You say, "Francesca, will you talk to me a little bit about how you got here."

She says, "Well I lived a really hard life. When I was 11 years old, the men came and took my daddy. They took my daddy because he loved Jesus. So, my brother and I followed to see where they were going to take him. They took him to this big arena where there were all these people. They took my daddy to the middle of the arena. Lions came out of every single door. I watched lions eat my daddy that day. I never cried so hard in my life. The next day, they came back for my brother and I. They took us back to the same big arena and put us in the middle and told us if we just denied Jesus, we could live. I had never been so scared in my life. But I couldn't do that. He was my reason for living. He was my everything. I died that day. The angels came and ushered me into heaven and I've been sitting here ever since. Isn't this special?"

You say, "Francesca, thank you so much."

And then sitting across from you is this beautiful black male with beautiful smooth skin and brown beautiful eyes. You look straight at him and say, "Sir, what's your name."

He says, "Martin."

You say, "Martin, will you talk to me a little bit about how you got here?"

He says, "Yeah, my daddy was a preacher. I grew up in the segregated south. You see, I grew up in America, and blacks and whites weren't treated the same. As a matter of fact, we couldn't use the same restrooms, we couldn't use the same sinks. I was a Baptist minister myself. And the scripture I read and the scripture I understood wasn't the Jesus that the south was portraying. So, I fought for the equality of all men and women. That was met with some harsh hatred. I kept fighting for this equality that I saw was the heart of Jesus. My last message was *I've seen the mountain top*, and in that message, I was just content with living out God's will. So, at the Lorraine Hotel at 2:06, I was assassinated, a bullet went through my cheek and lodged into my shoulder. The angels came and ushered me into heaven. I've been sitting here ever since."

And then Martin, Raheem, and Francesca look at you with six of the most penetrating eyes you've ever seen in your life. They turn on you in this beautiful moment at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and they say, "What about you? What's your story?"

What's your story? Woodland Hills, I promise and assure you God is not writing a story of racism in your life. God is not writing the story of hatred in your life. God is not writing a story of bitterness in your life. That is not the heart of Christ. A heart for Christ and a heart for racism cannot coexist. It will not coexist. Jesus hates racism. Satan loves it."

So, where do we begin? What do we do? We don't act paternalistically. We don't patronize. We begin by listening, by pressing in and listening and not airing our opinions all the time. We just walk so that the dust gets on us and we are able to see and engage, just like Christ did with the Samaritans

Father God, thank you so much for your Word and that it is clear as day that you hate racism. That a believer has no room in his heart to hate someone else or to act towards someone else differently because of the color of their skin or their background or whatever it is.

God, would you abolish, by your work of the Holy Spirit, racism in Southwest Missouri and Northwest and Northeast Arkansas. God, could you do a work that only you can do. I pray that you would. I pray that you would work in the hearts. And I pray that people would leave here challenged to examine their hearts towards that. In the way they speak and the way they communicate and the way they interact with people that don't look like them or talk like them or act like them.

I lift this all up in the matchless and mighty name of Jesus, and all God's people said... Amen.