



SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

# Racism: An Honest Conversation

Three Commitments for a Church for All People

A racially well-integrated church does not happen on its own. It takes intention: a commitment to listen, a commitment to cover, and a commitment to greater honor.

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PREACHED BY

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SERIES

We're Honoring to All People, Week 5 of 5

MAIN TEXT

Colossians 3:11-14

## INSIDE

# Contents

01 Sermon Transcript

---

02 Preaching Notes

---

03 Scripture List

---

04 About the Preacher

---

## WATCH THE MESSAGE

[youtu.be/J-OFmg5RNoY](https://youtu.be/J-OFmg5RNoY)

0:00 Eight values, one church

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5:56 Colossians 3 and a well-integrated church

---

9:21 An honest talk about racism

---

19:53 A commitment to listen

---

30:13 A commitment to cover

---

36:18 A commitment to greater honor

---

43:43 Romans 12: renewed minds

---

47:58 Prayer: send us people who stretch us

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# Sermon Transcript

I'm going to invite you to join me in your Bibles in Colossians chapter three. Colossians chapter three. Colossians chapter three, we'll get there shortly. Since last August, we've been in a series of series. That's fun to say. We've been in a series of series where we've been preaching through values for our church, eight core ministry values. Today, we are closing 11 and a half months of preaching on values. And today is the last of the series of series. This is an exciting day here in the church. It's an exciting day where we're closing out this intentional, focused time of preaching.

And I thought, because of that, we would just take a moment before I get into the core of my message today, and I would just share with you the eight values. I actually thought about this. They're published, they are online and in some different places, but I don't think I've ever really stood in front of you and just said, "Hey, here's the eight." And you're probably going to start seeing these show up on walls. You're probably going to start seeing these around. I wanted to get through teaching them to you before I was putting them in a sentence. How many of y'all figured out that none of these ideas fit in a sentence?

Especially this month, you need a little bit of preaching to go around these ideas. And so I want to just give you the eight real quick. The first one is that we're building everything on Jesus. We're rooted in the Bible. We are Bible people. Welcome to a Bible church. We take the Bible serious. I've been known to say this: the Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it. That's enough. That's enough for me. So we're a church that's rooted in the Bible. We are an openly Spirit-filled church. Your amens would not tell people that this morning. Let me try it again.

We're an openly Spirit-filled church. There you go. I mean, my God, who I gotta pay to get a shundai in this church, amen? Lord. And number four, we're also a generationally intentional church. Man, we're in a unique season of our church for that, while we're launching our youth ministry and we're finishing up renovations in our kids ministry. And we are a generationally intentional church. If you come in here at any given time, you might have people who've got a little season on them here, doing something, being in a class or being at a cookout or having a meeting.

And you might come in here and see a bunch of kids running around. We're generationally intentional. We don't just look in one direction generationally. We look at all directions generationally, amen. Number five, we're passionate about giving generously. We're passionate about sowing and serving through our giving. Not just in our local church, but we also give outside of our church. We are a generous people and we're passionate about it. Number six, we're hopeful for tomorrow. We're hopeful for tomorrow. We talked about this just a few months ago. We're not going to live on the edge of our seats worried that every time CNN makes a report, all hell is about to break loose.

We serve Jesus Christ. He sits on the throne and he's got you and me, amen. Hallelujah, we're hopeful about tomorrow. We're relentlessly driven by the mission. Jesus said to go into all the world, making disciples.

## MATTHEW 28:19-20 ESV

<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

We are going into all the world. Someone asked me the other day, they were asking me what my intention was at this church. And I said — this was in this room. Someone came to ask about maybe coming and checking out the church. They said, “What are you here to do?” I said, I didn’t come here to grow a church of 200.

I didn’t come here to grow a church of 1200. I came here to hit the Mobile region like an A-bomb for the gospel. We don’t mess around in this church. We are serious about the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You ought to shout while I am. I’m not even in the message and I’m feeling good. And the series, of course, we’ve been in most recently is that we’re honoring to all people. We’re honoring to all people. So three of these values have made it into a mission statement that we say on a regular basis. It’s actually written down over here, but you’ll hear people say this, different parts of it.

Because sometimes it’s “we’re building, we’re building.” Sometimes it’s “we’re building,” and sometimes it’s “who we are.” But we’re building a Jesus-centered — that’s, we’re building everything on Jesus. Spirit-filled, we’re an openly Spirit-filled church. We are openly — you know, I try not to say the P word because it scares people, but we are a Pentecostal church, amen. So we’re openly Spirit-filled, we’re Spirit-filled, and we’re honoring to all people. We are for all people, amen. We’re building a Jesus-centered, Spirit-filled church for all people. And in the last several weeks, we’ve really been focused on that last portion of that.

And the series that we’re in has been called For All People. So that’s where we’re at today. It’s where we’re going to keep going. I want to jump into Colossians chapter three, verse 11, and get started here for the message today.

#### COLOSSIANS 3:11-14 ESV

<sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. <sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians chapter three, verse 11: “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all in all. Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you,

so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Over the last several weeks, we’ve talked about a lot of different people. We have now — listen, let me be clear. We ain’t talked about every person, but we’ve talked about a lot of different people over the last several weeks. And everything I’ve preached over the last several weeks, I believe. I have not come up here and just sold you a bill of goods at any moment. Everything that’s come out of my mouth, I believe 100%. That’s where I’m at. And I’m not trying to sneak anything in on you.

I had someone online go on one of these messages I’ve preached and say, “That was... I have no idea what you believe. You’re an idiot.” I don’t know what to tell you. I can’t say this stuff more honest. My goodness gracious. And so we’ve talked a lot of stuff. Everything I’ve said, I believe. But I want you to know what we’re going to talk about today. When I talk about being honoring of all people, and when I say that we’re a church for all people, this is what actually comes to the forefront in my spirit. This is what I’m really, really talking about.

This is what I'm really pushing. And so today I want to touch on the fact that I really want us to be a racially well-integrated church. I said this early on: if we go to the grocery store together and we go to school together and we go to the hospital together, my God, I wish we would go to church together. Okay. And so I want to be a well-integrated, racially integrated church. And that is going to require a significant amount of intention. A significant amount of intention. It was within the lifetimes of people sitting in this room that it required the National Guard to integrate the University of Alabama racially.

So it would stand to reason that we're going to have to, I don't know, open our minds a little bit, right? It's going to take some intention for us to do that. It doesn't just happen. If "can't we all just get along" worked, we'd be there, right? And so it's going to require some intention. And I see us being a diverse church. I see us as a church full of white and black and brown and purple and green and yellow and whatever else you got. I want us to be a church of all types of people. And because of that today, I want to close out this series and this series of series.

I want to close out talking about racism today. Talk about racism. And I just want to say from the onset, I want to be clear just to set expectations. I am not going to solve racism today. I'm not solving racism from the pulpit today. And I don't say that so much for this room. I actually say that more for people online who watch, and for my friends and the ministry partners that watch what we do here that are people of color. Because I know there is always a white person who takes the microphone and has solved racism. White guy gets the mic and just sets it straight, finally.

Thank God he came along. And I just want to be clear for everybody watching online, I am white, I have a mic, but I am not going to solve racism today. And at our last church, which was a well-integrated church, we had a friend named White Mike. Y'all don't know what to laugh at in this service right here. Amen, I can tell, amen. Oftentimes when we think about racism, we think about overt racism. That's what comes to mind. Explicit acts of racially motivated hate. And I just need to tell you, that is not everything that racism is. Granted — I want to say this, we're a church for all people.

And I have stated that the only type of person who is not welcome in our church are people who would endanger children. That's the only person who's not welcome here. Our doors are wide open to everybody in this community. And let me just say, if there's somebody watching or somebody in the room that happened to not let it slip yet, and you're overtly racist, you are welcome to come to this church. You can come to this church. If you are as racist as they come, you're welcome to come to this church. But I just need you to know, I will do everything in my power to make you as uncomfortable as humanly possible.

And the minute I find out, oh, buddy, we are going to have a good time at your expense, amen. But you're welcome here. We'll believe the gospel will change you. Listen to this: "Racism is prejudice or discrimination based on race, expressed not only through open hostility, but also through attitudes, assumptions, policies, and systems that advantage some racial groups and disadvantage others." Here's what I want you to hear: "often without conscious intent." Often without conscious intent. Now, I'm not going to deal with any systematic racism stuff today, not because I don't have thoughts.

If y'all can't tell, I have opinions, they're in there, but I just don't think that we can do anything with that today. There's nothing we're going to solve on that level. And what I'd rather do is keep us in the zone of what we can deal with and what we can help and what we can improve, rather than what somebody far off ought to fix to make things better. I want to stay in the zone of what we can handle as a church and what we can solve. Now, I also just want to say this, just because I see some of the looks on your faces. So now I'm off the notes.

Y'all better be careful how y'all look at me. Ms. Betty, it's so good to see you this morning. God bless you. You know, Ms. Betty has been in this church longer than anybody else. Y'all give her a hand this morning. God bless you. And if you sneak out of here and I don't get a hug, we're going to have a problem. We're going to have a little turf war, amen. I want to make sure I see you before you leave today. But I'm seeing some of the looks on your faces and I just want to make sure that I say this. I'm going to get accused by the end of this message of embracing, like, critical race theory and CRT.

Listen, I have opinions, I have thoughts, and I just want to be clear. My opinions — just because I see your face, I'm just responding because I see it. I've been more nervous about this one than everything. Part of me just wants to get up here and go, "Kill Whitey!" Everybody loosen up, man. I don't know what to do with y'all when you're hostile and don't want to get involved. I live between "there's an overt problem" and "things aren't as good as they need to be" and "things are a lot better than they used to be." And I live between that. I'll tell you right now, I do not particularly love the phrase "systematic racism."

I don't like the word system. Now, there's a time that that's the best word for it. There are things that we can point back to like redlining and all that. We can go, "Well, that is systematic racism." However, we are still living in what I would call symptomatic racism. There are still things that affect people today that are a by-product of things that have happened historically. So we aren't where we used to be, but we're not where we need to be. And anybody who will just take five seconds would go, "Yeah, that's probably right. That's probably fair."

And so I just saw your faces looking at me like I was about to have y'all sign up to vote Democrat. And I just need to make sure y'all are cool. So racism is something that gets on us that we don't realize is there sometimes, because it's actually very natural. And I'm going to just go ahead and say it, rip the band-aid off: everybody, every person in the world is racist. Everybody is, not just white people, not just people of color. If you breathe, you are racist to some degree. Let me just say, I'm racist to some degree. Why? Because we're making snap decisions on people based on all of the data that we've taken in, or the input we've taken in over our life.

There are everyday attitudes and assumptions that we operate in because we're making assumptions based on things like what we've seen in genders, what we've seen in ages, and yes, what we've seen in races. If you removed race from it, there's a prejudice there. When you pull up to McDonald's and you see a teenager at the window, you've made a snap judgment. You've made a snap judgment when you see that. You've already decided how your service is going to go. And if it's the best service you've ever had at McDonald's, they already have the disadvantage of what you put in your brain.

So they're starting at a deficit. Well, that same thing happens for race. When we have different experiences or see different things or see things on television, we're making snap decisions on people based on race all the time. We do that. And I do want to just say this, that Mobile has a uniquely palpable racist issue. Racism is in the air down here significantly. I want you to know, I have lived all over the South. I've lived in Atlanta, I've lived in Memphis, which would probably be the only place I would say would give Mobile a good run for its money.

When we went to Memphis, we got in the little tram to take you from the airplane to the car dealership, or the rental car place. And I just was asking, I said, "So what do you think about Memphis?" He goes, "Oh, Memphis is a great place. It's got its problems." I said, "Like what?" He goes, "Murder." That was for free, by the way. But we've lived in Memphis. I grew up in Birmingham. I've lived in Huntsville. So I've lived all over the South. We've lived in Florida, lived in Michigan. If you think that thing gets better the further north you go, you'd be wrong.

We get a bad rap down here in the South, but you Yankees — look at that. Say a prejudice just came out right in front of you. It's okay, I married one, amen. Y'all got some stuff going on too, amen. But Mobile does have a uniquely heavy racism factor. There are places I walk into and I can feel it. I can feel it in the atmosphere. And so this is something that affects our areas. And I just want to make sure that our church is able and capable of welcoming people who do not look like us. But I also believe that that's going to take intention and it's going to take instruction.

That doesn't just happen. The funny thing about race is sometimes the more well-intentioned you are, the more racist you get. Y'all ever seen that? Y'all ever seen that white guy who has a black friend? And shares every joke he shouldn't share with that guy. "Oh, I got one for you today." Sometimes people just don't know how to act. I want to help you with that. I can just feel people leaving the church already, amen. So let me just be clear. I do have strong opinions about everything, and I have strong opinions on politics, race, education. To be honest with you, I got strong opinions on things like nachos.

I've got strong opinions on everything. But today I want to make sure that we stick with the main thing. Like I said, I'm not getting off into systematic stuff. This is everything that I think is going to actually help us. I don't want to float around in all the minutia. Let me just be clear. I'm not running for Congress. So I'm about to treat this like a pastor would treat it. And for some of y'all, I'm going to be too much. For some of y'all, I'm not going to do enough. But what I'm going to do is just try to be faithful to the word. Are y'all ready? Are y'all ready?

Okay, I'm not going to defend myself again. If y'all have a problem with it, just, you know, I don't know, cuss at me in front of everybody so they know. Y'all aren't good for any laughs today. I don't know what y'all's problem is, amen. All right, that being said, are y'all ready? I want to talk to you about three commitments that'll help our church to be welcoming for all people. If you're ready, just say amen. Okay, good, number one. Number one is a commitment to listen. A commitment to listen. A commitment to listen.

#### **JAMES 1:19-21 ESV**

<sup>19</sup> Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup> Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

James chapter one says this: "Know this, my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your soul." Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. It's almost like we get dyslexic as soon as we hit this verse and we become quick to anger, quick to speak, slow to listen. In 2020, as we're kind of in the breakout of COVID and everything going on, a gentleman named George Floyd was killed. And — or he died, I should say. There's so much information that has come out on the back end of this that it makes it almost impossible to get people to go back to the moment that happened.

And what I'd like you to do is just for a minute, I'd like you to just let all of the news commentary you've heard and all the C-SPAN you've watched just leak out of your ears for a moment. I want you to go back to that moment with me. When that happened, it shook me. It shook me heavy. We had always heard things. We'd heard that things were going on, but then to watch this man die in the street, it just — man, that shook me. Now, obviously since then, there's been a

lot of information that's come out and there's a lot of stuff. And you want to talk about a situation where everybody did the wrong thing?

That's a good one. Okay. But at the same time, there were other issues going on. One of them, Breonna Taylor had a police officer — and this isn't, I'm not anti-police. I love the police. Police rescued me out of the worst situation I've ever been in. I'm only anti-police when I've been speeding. Just like everybody in this room. But Breonna Taylor had a police officer kick the door in on her apartment, come in and kill her while she's sleeping. At the same time there was another gentleman named Ahmaud Arbery who, in Brunswick, Georgia, did not have an encounter with the police, but was jogging through a neighborhood and two white men in a pickup truck began following him.

And then ended up shooting him. And he died right there where he was. He died right there in the street. And then these men were let go for months, for months. Nobody pulled them in and threw them in a jail cell and said, "We're going to figure something." No bail was set on them, nothing. They just out here running around. They having fish fries two weeks after killing a guy in cold blood. And we had that on video as well. It took a little while for that to circulate and really get around. This stuff just shook me. And when I saw all of this, I was like, what is going on?

I mean, what is happening around this stuff? And all I'm saying that for is just for this point: it rattled me. It rattled me. And so I started asking questions. I did two things. One is I picked up the phone and I called some of my friends who are black and brown. I called people of color and I just started asking some questions. And I was stunned by the stories that people who I had a relationship with started to tell me. One of the gentlemen actually married Ashleigh and I. So I'm not talking about just people I had met and never heard from again.

I'm talking about people I knew, had ongoing relationship, and starting to hear stories of things that they had experienced or walked through. And I was stunned by it. One of my friends told me he was standing in his front yard one day at a house he had lived at for years. He's standing in his front yard. He is on the phone with somebody. And the next thing he knows, sirens come whirling through the neighborhood. And like anybody else, he's going, "What's going on?" Next thing he knows, someone is throwing him onto the hood of his car in front of his house.

I don't know what you pay on your mortgage, but that's a lot of money to get thrown on the hood of the car. Why? Because someone in the neighborhood didn't recognize him. And I'm just telling you, when you think that that's a problem — I ain't never been thrown on the hood of a car. I ain't never gone through that. It just shook me. So I called, I started asking questions. I wanted to get informed. I wanted to know what the experience was like. I'm not always doing that. This isn't every Tuesday for me, but when things flare up, I have a tendency to just get on the phone.

I want to know what people are feeling and thinking and what's going on. The other thing that I did is I started to order some books. I started to order books. Most of those books being from people who I don't agree with anything these people say, but I wanted to hear. I wanted to learn. I wanted to know. And I don't necessarily recommend that for everybody, but for me, it was very helpful. I ordered more than I read. Amen. Just like you do. Y'all got a bunch of books that have not got nice clean pages on them at the house. Amen. And so, but I read a few of those books.

One of those books was a book called White Fragility. I want to be very clear. This lady and me probably couldn't get through an agreeable lunch. Okay. Maybe over pasta. You're going to have to set the table well for me. Amen. But the lady who wrote it — and there's stuff even in the book. It's one of the only books I have in my office that I've read through. And I have, like, screaming notes in the book. There's just things I got. But the basic premise of the book is very sound. And it gets more bad press because it sounds so awful.

But the idea of white fragility — and I'm not asking you to go out here and embrace it. I just want to explain it to you. But the idea of white fragility is that white people struggle anytime the conversation of race comes up. When race comes up, white people get tight and they get defensive. And there's a reason for this. It's because usually when race comes up, it feels like an indictment on white people. And often it is. But it can feel like this thing that — all of a sudden we're put on defense and it's hard to listen because we're ready to take the hits.

We're ready to battle. We want to stand our ground. I haven't done anything wrong, which is both true and untrue all at the same time. All of that can be true. And so what I need you to know is that when it comes to race, there's actually quite a bit of nuance involved. But when we become super defensive around the topic of race, when we put our guard up every time that it comes up, we cannot do what the apostle James told us to do. You cannot be quick to hear. When you have a defense for everything that comes out of someone's mouth, you can't be quick.

That's fast to speak, not slow to speak. So James says we have to listen. We have to listen. And I just want to encourage you with this, that when a person or a people group tells you how they think or feel in relation to something that you cannot identify with, believe them. Why would you argue with them? When they tell you something, when they say, "This is what it's like to be black," or "This is what it's like to be Mexican in America," or Hispanic in America, or third generation American born Mexican in America — when they're telling you what the feeling is like, what it feels like, just listen and don't argue with it.

And don't go find you one black person who seems to defy the odds. We got three people that show up on one news channel and they have defined the whole race for you. You can't do that. You gotta listen. We have to listen. We have to be open. We have to hear. At minimum, don't argue about it. We gotta be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. A pastor taught me years ago that when I start to hear something I don't understand, and it might feel like an attack on me — sometimes it's hard to believe that people attack pastors, amen. Believe it or not, there's people writing emails right now.

But whenever you feel under attack, simply ask this: "I hear you say" — whatever you hear them saying — "I hear you say... help me understand." Help me understand. It's going to be hard to see and recognize from where we sit often. And so every time you hear something regarding race, don't be the one that responds, "Well, statistics," "Well, this person said," "Well, it ain't easy for white people either." Okay, but we're not competing. I mean, it ain't easy. I mean, I grew up in hell on earth, but there are people who go through things and we have to be mindful of that.

So when we start saying, "Well, this," "Well, that," it's the same argument that kindergartners make, and it just isn't worth engaging in in the first place. So you won't grow, you won't contribute, and you won't be for all people until you learn to commit to listen, to commit to listen. Number two, a commitment to cover, a commitment to cover.

#### **1 CORINTHIANS 12:23-24 ESV**

<sup>23</sup> and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, <sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,

First Corinthians chapter 12 says, "And on those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor. And our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require.

But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it.” That phrase there, greater modesty, greater modesty. We cover parts of the body of Christ that need covering. And when someone is different from the people around them, they feel exposed. They feel exposed. On Sesame Street, we used to sing a little song that said [worship]. And when a person is different than everyone they’re sitting in a room with, or everybody that they’re in an environment with, when a person is that, they feel that they do not belong.

They feel that they don’t have a place there. And I would imagine that it would be the same thing for you or for me. I can imagine if I walked into a meeting that was me and 35 middle-aged black women, I would probably feel out of place. Now don’t get it twisted, they’d be tickled, okay? Amen, because I’m invited. Ashleigh knows, Ashleigh’s seen it. All her friends think I’m great, amen. And they call me Pastor Mayfield, and I like it. Amen. But nevertheless, I’d probably be uncomfortable. It’d probably be hard to relate. I’d probably be worried about saying or doing the wrong thing.

Not necessarily afraid that I’d offend them, but afraid that I’d make a target out of myself. So imagine what it feels like to walk in the room and not be like anyone else. When people come into our church and don’t look like the others, we have to cover that person with greater modesty. What does that mean? Well, it means we take the attention off the things that make them different, which oftentimes is the inverse of what our instinct is. We want to highlight the thing that makes them different as a way to show approval, but we don’t need to show approval.

We have to show greater modesty. We have to cover them. And I’m not talking about walking around and saying, “Oh, I don’t see color.” People doing this colorblind thing. I was in Florida and I was a music pastor down there. Man, you want to talk about some white folks. I had them, boy. I don’t think that church had ever had salt in it, amen. And talking about some white people. And we had a black guy come and join the worship team. And he’s about nine foot tall. Guy’s taller than all get out. He’s a huge individual. And he is black. I’m talking dark black. And I was talking to my drummer’s mother, saying something about him.

And I said his name and she goes, “I don’t know who that is.” I said, “The black guy on the stage that sings with me.” And she goes, “I don’t see color.” My God. No, no, no, no. You ain’t colorblind on black and white, amen. “I can’t see red. I can’t see orange.” And so just that stuff. And by the way, that colorblind nonsense is one of the most offensive things you can do. Especially for black Americans. Let me just say this. Black Americans that feel like they have not been seen the entire time they’ve been in this country. So to pretend you don’t see it is an insult.

Sorry, some of it just flows out. Amen. So when people feel that way, when people feel that they’re exposed, they are vulnerable for greater embarrassment. And when people feel embarrassed, they retreat. In fact, it’s been said that the way that you grow your church is, as soon as people get in, you have to help them feel relaxed. And when people feel relaxed, they’ll receive. But when people feel embarrassed, they feel defensive and they won’t receive. And so we have to be mindful of people who come in and might feel exposed and feel vulnerable and be vulnerable to greater embarrassment.

And I want to address this real quick. I’m just going to correct some things in the room real quick. So everybody, listen to your pastor. Everybody say, “I love you, pastor.” Five of you said it and I appreciate it. Amen. I know that some of y’all are getting excited when we have black people come into the church. And I know you’re excited about it because I’m excited about it, okay? Because we’re a church for all people. Somebody say “for all people.” But here’s the deal, okay? I need y’all to play it cool. Some of y’all have been a little too excited about it and I just need you to play it cool.

Why? Because we cover these people with greater modesty. We treat them with greater modesty. We don't have someone walk through the front door and then run through the church, "Preacher, we got a black boy in here!" That ain't going to go well. And it makes them feel exposed. And so just help me with that, amen? All right, y'all have good hearts. We just want to cover people who are friends of color, amen? Number three, a commitment to greater honor, a commitment to greater honor.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:24-25 ESV

<sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

Back to 1 Corinthians 12, it says, "which our more presentable parts do not require, but God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body,

but that the members may have the same care for one another." It's really interesting there. It says that — going back to verse 24 — that God gives greater honor to the part of the body that lacks it in order that there may be no division. The solution to the divide is actually greater honor. It's greater honor. Race, culture, heritage — by the way, I'm throwing Tony Chachere's in this message right now, just so you know, we're turning the heat up. Race, culture, heritage, they have a complicated relationship, especially in the South. They have a very complicated relationship.

When I think about it, I immediately — and there were about five different examples I could give you, but there was one that I thought we might all be able to kind of just hear and remain calm. Please fasten your seatbelt here. And I thought about Confederate flags. Confederate flags are an interesting intersection of race and culture and heritage and family. And there's a real merger there. Again, it's not limited to that, but that is one of those things — some of y'all have little things you remember from grandma's house that were precious to you, but turns out it's overtly racist.

And, you know, so I get it. There's just different things, but Confederate flags, I just want to hit that for a minute. I'm not picking on Confederate flags. I'm asking you to adjust the illustration to your area of life. But to many people in this room, the Confederate flag is no more than a symbol of Southern pride. Let me interject right here. I'm from the South and I'm proud of it. I'm not trying to be ugly to anybody, but I would not want to be from above the Mason-Dixon if I had to be. Just go ahead and wipe me out. I don't want none of it. I want to be from the South.

I like our food. I like the way we talk. I like my tea sweet. I heard a guy say one time, I heard Alabamians like to have their air conditioner cold, their food fried and their tea sweet. Baby, if that is wrong, I don't want to be right. I love being Southern. Amen. I like it. I have carried my Southernness as an ambassador around this great country of ours. But to some people in this room, the Confederate flag, all it is is it's a symbol of Southern pride. It has no other meaning to it. It means the South. That's all it means. It's not the Confederacy necessarily.

It's just a symbol of Southern living. For some in this room, the Confederate flag is a symbol of legacy. It's been passed down from several generations. And you could say my granddaddy fought under that, or my great granddaddy, or great, great granddaddy, or great, great, great, great, great granddaddy fought under that flag. And he was a major figure in our family. Okay, I get it. I get that stuff. There are some people in this room that are full-blooded Americans who look at the Confederate flag and say, I'm American, but there's something about that flag.

You look at it and you say, it means something to them. And then there's other people in this room that maybe it's not the Confederate flag. It has nothing to do with a Confederate flag. But you know, when Bo and Luke Duke come running down the road in the General Lee, it takes you back to a time and a place where getting out and having fun and cutting up and running against Boss Hogg. And it isn't about the General Lee. It's about the General Lee. It's not about the Confederate flag. It's about the General Lee. It's Bo and Luke Duke, number one, come on, let's go.

And I've got friends I went to high school with that basically were Bo and Luke Duke. They grew up watching the show and they modeled their life after it. And so it's not a Confederate — it's just, but it does, it takes you to a time and a place and it means something to you. But then there's also people in the South, especially, that look at the Confederate flag and it's a reminder of oppression, slavery, always being less than, not being treated as a person, but as property. And it means something to them. And there's something about treating people with greater honor.

It's easy to honor people in the things that don't matter. But when there's a tension between all of these things, that greater honor becomes a job. And so let me just encourage you, you got a Confederate flag and you want to fly it out in front of your house and stuff, maybe it's time to live in greater honor. Maybe it's time to get you a really nice box. Pull the Confederate flag down off the wall in the house, or the flagpole outside, or out of your car. And you take that thing and you fold it up and you treat it with respect and you put it in a nice box.

And once or twice a year, you pull that out and you have a moment to remember Paw Paw or Maw Maw or Meemaw or whatever you got. You remember that moment, but we treat people around us with greater honor. And we consider that maybe it ain't the same thing for everybody. What's no big deal for you could be a big deal for somebody else. And maybe we keep Bo and Luke in the den at the house. Maybe Bo and Luke stay in the man cave. Maybe we use our Confederate flag t-shirt for yard work, not for Walmart runs. That's called greater honor. That's greater honor.

It's an interesting world because you're dealing with the tension of there ain't nothing wrong with it and there's everything wrong with it at the same time. And that's when we just treat people with greater honor. So to go back over these three things we've talked about today, if we're going to be a church for all people — I mean really a church for all people — it's going to require a commitment to listen, a commitment to cover, treat with greater modesty, and a commitment to greater honor. And I don't really have a close for today, but I've been thinking about some stuff the last few days as I've thought about how to close it.

I don't know how you close a message like this. Diana Ross said [worship]. So I don't know, but I have been processing this. Romans — this won't be on the screen.

#### ROMANS 12:2 ESV

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." Be transformed by the renewal of your mind. And it goes on to say — the Holy Spirit kind of just dropped this on me and I started to see some of the context. So, be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

#### ROMANS 12:3-4 ESV

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

It goes on to say that “by the grace of God given to me I say to everyone not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.”

Slow to speak, slow to anger, quick to listen, right? “But to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith God’s assigned to him. For as in one body, we have many members, and the members do not have all the same function.” Listen, the beauty of the body of Christ is that it’s the first time in the history of all creation that everybody can come together and be in the same place under the same banner of the finished work of Jesus Christ and be in a room all together. And it’s multiple people, but multiple people of different racial background, different ethnic background, different socioeconomic class, different education levels, different ages, all of this differentness coming together.

And so you can’t look at people who are different than you and assume that your life experience should be good enough for them to just get on board with whatever you think they ought to get on board with.

#### ROMANS 12:15-16 ESV

<sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

And then it goes down in Romans chapter 12, verse 15 and says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, live in harmony with one another. Don’t be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Don’t be wise in your own sight.” This isn’t a be smart enough game. This isn’t a have the right answers game. The statistics don’t solve this. It doesn’t matter.

And part of the reason the statistics don’t — I’ve been screaming numbers at y’all for the last month. The reason I haven’t used any of them this week is because they’re all wrong. This is, for whatever reason, a world where people just pick and choose whatever they want to say. So I can give you numbers right now to make it look like we are the most racist place on the planet. I can also give you numbers that would say, “Guys, I have great news, racism, it’s been gone for a while.” That’s why the numbers are all wrong. They all say different things. They’re all lying to us.

But what we can do is we can look at people and we can go, if you’re hurting, I’ll hurt with you. And if it doesn’t really affect me, I’ll at least put it on and try to stand with you and be with you. All I know to do, all I know to tell you, church, is that if we’ll commit to listen, commit to cover, commit to treat people with greater honor and step outside of all the argument, all the fighting, all the having to be right all the time — because my God, we’re all just weaponized with our opinions. We’re ready to fight with what we think about things. And if we just step out of that and go, I see you, I hear you, I stand with you, and I may go home and not understand you, but I’m going to stand with you.

Amen. So I just want to finish this morning and say, let’s pray. Let’s pray. I didn’t start doing this because I want to sing and play and preach and be up here and just — man, this is a people thing. This is what ministry is, what church is: about

people. It's about people. And what we do is we make the path straight for people to receive the gospel. Just like John the Baptist, we make the path straight for people.

**ISAIAH 40:3 ESV**

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

We don't go out here and throw something in the road and see if people trip over it, but we don't make it more complicated to get to the gospel of Jesus Christ than it has to be.

Amen. Thank you, Lord. Let's do this. We're closing out this series. We're going to ask God to bring people in the church. This is actually what I want you to do. This is the prayer. Okay, I have it now. This is what we're going to pray. Thank you, Lord. I'm going to have you lift your hands out like this this morning. Go ahead. And I'm going to ask you to ask the Lord right where you're at to send people to this church and make you uncomfortable. So God will teach you something. So God will teach you how to deal with somebody different than yourself. And listen, it's not always easy.

It's not always clean. Pastor Ricky would tell you, we came from a church up there that is very integrated, probably 60-40, one of the most integrated churches in the state of Alabama. We had all kinds of people in that church. And me and him would sit back and watch a couple of white and black folks just getting into arguments all the time on the internet. And guess what? That's what you ask for. We're asking for that. We're asking for people to come in here and misbehave. We're asking for it to be tough. We're asking for it to be difficult. So let's pray.

Father, send us people that make us uncomfortable. God, as the pastor of the church, send some people that make me uncomfortable, that I don't really know what to do with. Send some people that I struggle with. But Father, send us people that don't look the way we think they ought to look, that don't sound the way they ought to sound, that don't smell the way they ought to smell. God, give us some people that make us uncomfortable so we can be challenged and changed and grow and become more, and we can become more well-rounded, Father, that a diverse church would also be a benefit to our life, that it would help us to prosper and grow and deal with more people and learn how to do things that we wouldn't otherwise be able to do.

But God, I'm asking you to give us people in our church that aren't welcome anywhere else. God, give us people in our church that make other churches uncomfortable, but they didn't make a decision to be for all people. Father, give us the people that aren't welcome over there and over here and over yonder. God, give us the people that everybody else has rejected. And Father, I'm asking you that you would teach us something. And Lord, we're not asking you to make it easy. We're not asking you to make it effortless. But God, if you'll anoint us with the Holy Ghost to be open and available for all people, then we'll be open and available for all people.

In Jesus' mighty name, amen. Do you receive the word this morning? Amen.

# Preaching Notes

## Before You Preach

This message closes the last series in a year of preaching through the church's eight core ministry values, and it closes the series on being honoring to all people. It names the real intention behind that value: a church that is racially well integrated.

Three cautions. First, set expectations early and with humility: this message will not solve racism, and it does not try to. It stays in the zone of what a local church can actually do. Second, the room may get tense. Expect some people to hear “critical race theory” and others to hear “not enough.” Name that up front, then preach as a pastor, not a politician. Third, this message deliberately uses no statistics. Keep it that way: the point is listening to people, not winning an argument with numbers.

Adjust the illustrations to your setting. The Confederate flag is used because it is a familiar example in the Deep South. The principle applies to any symbol that means one thing to you and something painful to someone else.

## Introduction

Open your Bibles to Colossians 3.

Since August 10, 2025, we have been preaching through our core ministry values, a series of series. Today we close out eleven and a half months of intentional, focused preaching. Before we get into the message, here are all eight values:

- We're Building Everything on Jesus
- We're Rooted in the Bible
- We're Openly Spirit-Filled
- We're Generationally Intentional
- We're Passionate About Giving Generously
- We're Hopeful for Tomorrow
- We're Relentlessly Driven by the Mission
- We're Honoring to All People

Three of these values made it into the vision statement this church says all the time. For the last month we have focused on the last of them: being a church for all people.

## COLOSSIANS 3:11-14 ESV

<sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. <sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Over the last several weeks we have talked about a lot of different people. Everything I have preached, I believe. I have not tried to sneak anything in on you. But today I want to tell you what is really behind this value.

**I want us to be a racially well-integrated church.** If we go to the grocery store together, go to school together and go to the hospital together, I wish we would go to church together.

That will require intention. It was within the lifetimes of people in this room that it took the National Guard to integrate the University of Alabama. It stands to reason that it will take at least some intention, and some open minds, for us. It does not just happen. If “can’t we all just get along” worked, we would already be there.

I see a diverse church, full of white and black and brown and every other kind of person. A church where “Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11).

## SETTING EXPECTATIONS

So today we are talking about racism. Let me say from the outset: I am not going to solve racism today.

I say that less for this room than for people watching online, including friends and ministry partners who are people of color. They know there always seems to be a white guy who gets a microphone and finally sets it all straight. I am white. I have a mic. But I have not solved racism.

## WHAT RACISM IS

When we think about racism, we usually think about overt racism: explicit acts of racially motivated hate. That is not all racism is.

A word about who is welcome here. The only people not welcome in this church are people who would endanger children. If you are overtly racist, you are welcome to come to this church. But I will do everything in my power to make you as uncomfortable as humanly possible, and we believe the gospel will change you.

Here is a working definition:

“Racism is prejudice or discrimination based on race, expressed not only through open hostility but also through attitudes, assumptions, policies, and systems that advantage some racial groups and disadvantage others, often without conscious intent.”

Notice the last phrase: **often without conscious intent.**

I am not going to deal with systemic racism today. Not because I do not have thoughts, but because there is nothing we can solve at that level from here. I would rather stay in the zone of what we can deal with, help and improve as a church, rather than what someone far off ought to fix.

### NOT WHERE WE USED TO BE, NOT WHERE WE NEED TO BE

I am going to get accused by the end of this message of embracing critical race theory. Let me be clear. I have strong opinions on politics, race and education. To be honest, I have strong opinions on nachos. I do not embrace CRT, but I also do not embrace “we’re all good now.” The truth is somewhere in the middle.

I do not particularly love the phrase “systemic racism.” There are things in our history, like redlining, where that is the right word. But today we are living in what I would call **symptomatic racism**: things that still affect people today as a by-product of things that happened historically. We are not where we used to be, but we are not where we need to be. Anyone who takes five seconds with that will say, “That’s probably fair.”

### EVERYONE IS RACIST TO SOME DEGREE

Racism is something that gets on us without our realizing it, because it is actually very natural. So let me rip the band-aid off: **every person in the world is racist to some degree**. Not just white people, not just people of color. I am racist to some degree.

Why? Because we make snap decisions about people based on everything we have taken in over our lives. We make assumptions based on gender, age, and yes, race.

**Illustration: the McDonald’s window.** Pull up to McDonald’s and see a teenager at the window, and you have already made a snap judgment about how your service is going to go. Even if it turns out to be the best service you have ever had, that young person started at a deficit. The same thing happens with race, based on our experiences and what we have seen on television.

Mobile has a uniquely palpable racism problem. I have lived all over the South: Birmingham, Huntsville, Atlanta, Memphis, Florida. I have also lived in Michigan, and if you think it gets better the further north you go, you would be wrong. But there are places here I walk into and can feel it in the atmosphere.

I want our church to be able to welcome people who do not look like us, and that takes intention and instruction. Sometimes the more well-intentioned we are, the more awkward we get. You have seen the white guy with one black friend who shares every joke he should not share with him. Some people just do not know how to act. I want to help.

I am not running for Congress, so I am going to treat this the way a pastor would. For some of you this will be too much, and for some of you it will not be enough. I am just going to try to be faithful to the Word.

Here are three commitments that will help our church be welcoming to all people.

# 1. A Commitment to Listen

JAMES 1:19-21 ESV

<sup>19</sup> Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup> Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

“Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19). It is almost as if we get dyslexic when we hit this verse: we become quick to anger, quick to speak and slow to listen.

**Illustration: 2020.** In 2020, in the middle of COVID, George Floyd died. So much information has come out since then that it is hard to get people back to that moment. But set aside the commentary for a minute and go back to it with me. Watching that man die in the street shook me.

Around the same time, Breonna Taylor was shot and killed in her own apartment when police forced their way in at night; she had been asleep. (I am not anti-police. I love the police. I am only anti-police when I have been speeding, just like everybody in this room.) And Ahmaud Arbery was jogging through a neighborhood in Brunswick, Georgia, when two white men in a pickup truck followed him and shot him. He died in the street, and the men who shot him were not arrested for months. There was video of that too.

All of this rattled me. So I did two things.

**First, I picked up the phone.** I called friends who are black and brown and asked direct questions. I was stunned by what people I had known for years, people in ongoing relationship with me, told me. One of them is the man who married Ashleigh and me. One friend told me he was standing in his own front yard, at the house he had lived in for years, talking on the phone, when police sirens came through the neighborhood and someone threw him onto the hood of his car. Why? Someone in the neighborhood did not recognize him. I have never been thrown on the hood of a car.

**Second, I ordered books.** Most were by authors I disagree with on a lot, but I wanted a perspective outside my own. (I ordered more than I read, just like you.)

One of them was *White Fragility*. I would probably struggle to get through an agreeable lunch with the author, and my copy is full of screaming notes in the margins. But the basic idea is sound: white people often struggle when the conversation turns to race. We get tight and defensive, because race conversations often feel like an indictment of white people. We are ready to take the hits and stand our ground: “I haven’t done anything wrong,” which can be true and untrue at the same time.

But when we put our guard up every time race comes up, we cannot do what James tells us to do. When you have a defense ready for everything that comes out of someone’s mouth, you are not quick to hear. You are quick to speak.

**When a person or a people group tells you how they think or feel in relation to something you cannot identify with, believe them, or at minimum, don’t argue with them.** When someone tells you what it is like to

be black in America, or Hispanic, or a third-generation Mexican American, just listen.

And do not find one person who seems to defy the odds and let a handful of voices on one news channel define a whole race for you.

A pastor taught me years ago that when I hear something I do not understand, and it feels like an attack, the best response is: **"I hear you say \_\_\_\_\_. Help me understand."**

If every time race comes up your response is "Well, statistics," "Well, this person said," or "Well, it ain't easy for white people either," that is the same argument kindergartners make. We are not competing. You will not grow, you will not contribute, and you will not be for all people until you commit to listen.

## 2. A Commitment to Cover

1 CORINTHIANS 12:23-24 ESV

<sup>23</sup> and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, <sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,

"Our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty" (1 Corinthians 12:23). We cover the parts of the body of Christ that need covering.

When someone is different from the people around them, they feel exposed. On Sesame Street we used to sing, "One of these things is not like the others." When it is a person, they feel that. They feel they do not belong.

**Illustration: the room of 35.** If I walked into a meeting with 35 middle-aged black women and me, I would probably feel out of place. Don't get it twisted, they would be tickled to have me. But I would be worried about saying or doing the wrong thing, not so much offending anyone as making a target of myself. Now imagine walking into a room and not looking like anyone else.

When people come into our church who do not look like the others, we cover them with greater modesty. **That means we take the attention off the things that make them different.** That is often the opposite of our instinct. We want to highlight the difference to show approval, but no one needs our approval. They need greater modesty.

I am not talking about being "colorblind."

**Illustration: "I don't see color."** Years ago I was a music pastor at a church in Florida that was about as white as a church can be. A black man joined the worship team, a very tall man, and I mentioned him to a church member. She did not know who I meant, so I said, "The black guy on the stage that sings with me." She said, "I don't see color." No. Colorblind nonsense is one of the most offensive things you can do, especially to black Americans, many of whom feel they have not been seen the entire time they have been in this country. Pretending you do not see it is an insult.

When people feel exposed, they are vulnerable to greater embarrassment. When people feel embarrassed, they retreat and get defensive, and they will not receive. When they feel relaxed, they receive. So we have to be mindful of anyone who comes in feeling exposed.

**A word of correction, with a smile.** I know some of you get excited when black people come into our church, because I get excited about it too. We are a church for all people. But play it cool. We do not have someone walk through the front door and then run through the building shouting, “Preacher, we got a black boy in here!” That will not go well, and it makes people feel exposed. You have good hearts. Help me cover our friends of color with greater modesty.

### 3. A Commitment to Greater Honor

1 CORINTHIANS 12:24-25 ESV

<sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

God gives “greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body” (1 Corinthians 12:24-25). **The solution to the divide is greater honor.**

Race, culture and heritage have a complicated relationship, especially in the South. I could give five examples. Here is one we can all hear and stay calm: the Confederate flag. I am not picking on it. Adjust the illustration to your own area of life.

#### **Illustration: the Confederate flag.**

- To many people, the Confederate flag is no more than a symbol of Southern pride. (I am from the South and proud of it: cold air conditioning, fried food and sweet tea.)
- For some, it is a legacy passed down for generations: “My granddaddy fought under that flag.”
- For some full-blooded Americans, there is just something about it that means something to them.
- For others, it has nothing to do with the Confederacy. It is the General Lee, Bo and Luke Duke running from Boss Hogg, and a time and place that meant something.
- But for others, especially in the South, that flag is a reminder of oppression, slavery, and being treated not as a person but as property. And that means something to them.

What do you do with that tension? It is easy to honor people in the things that do not matter. When there is real tension, greater honor becomes a job.

So maybe it is time to get a really nice box. Take the flag down off the wall, the flagpole or the car. Fold it up, treat it with respect, and put it in that box. Once or twice a year, take it out and have your moment to remember Paw Paw or Meemaw. Keep Bo and Luke in the den or the man cave. Maybe the Confederate flag T-shirt is for yard

work, not Walmart runs. **That is called greater honor.** What is no big deal to you could be a big deal to someone else.

There is nothing wrong with it and everything wrong with it at the same time. That is exactly when we treat people with greater honor.

## Conclusion

If we are going to be a church for all people, really for all people, it will take:

- A commitment to **listen**.
- A commitment to **cover**.
- A commitment to **greater honor**.

I do not really have a close for a message like this. But I keep coming back to Romans 12.

### ROMANS 12:2 ESV

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

### ROMANS 12:3-5 ESV

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

The beauty of the body of Christ is that, for the first time in history, people of every racial and ethnic background, every class, education level and age, can come together under the same banner of the finished work of Jesus. So you cannot look at people who are different from you and assume your life experience should be good enough for them to just get on board.

### ROMANS 12:15-16 ESV

<sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

This is not a “be smart enough” game or a “have the right answers” game. The statistics do not solve this. That is why I have not used any numbers this week: depending on who you ask, they say opposite things.

We live combat-ready with our opinions and are rarely open to understanding. But isn’t that part of the thing? Being “transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2) by the continual touch of the Holy Spirit is part of living for the Lord.

What we can do is look at people and say: if you are hurting, I will hurt with you. If it does not affect me, I will still stand with you. **I see you, I hear you, I stand with you**, even if I go home and still do not fully understand.

Ministry is about people. Like John the Baptist, we make the path straight for people to receive the gospel. We do not make it more complicated to get to Jesus than it has to be.

## THE PRAYER

Have the congregation lift their hands and ask the Lord to send people to this church who make them uncomfortable, so God can teach them how to love people different from themselves. It will not always be easy or clean. A well-integrated church will have its share of tension, and that is what we are asking for.

Pray along these lines:

- Father, send us people who make us uncomfortable, including people who make me, the pastor, uncomfortable.
- Send us people who do not look, sound or act the way we expect, so we can be challenged and changed and grow.
- Send us the people who are not welcome anywhere else, the people other churches have rejected.
- We are not asking You to make it easy. Anoint us with the Holy Spirit to be open and available for all people.

In Jesus' name, amen.

# Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

## Read

Read aloud in the message.

### COLOSSIANS 3:11-14

<sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. <sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

### JAMES 1:19-21

<sup>19</sup> Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup> Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:23-24

<sup>23</sup> and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, <sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,

### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:24-25

<sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

### ROMANS 12:2

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

### ROMANS 12:3-4

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

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ROMANS 12:15-16

<sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

## Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

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MATTHEW 28:19-20

<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

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ISAIAH 40:3

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

## ABOUT THE PREACHER



# Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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