

Tonight, our world is in turmoil, a turmoil which didn't begin tonight, or this week, or even this generation. People are demonstrating, protesting, and rioting on the streets of cities all over America because yet another black man has been killed by a white police officer. The anger that sits just under the surface has broken through once again, and like a volcano, the devastation is explosive and wide reaching. People decry the racism of the upper class, or the systems we've established in this world. Others decry the violence as an unnecessary and unrelated act of selfishness.

The deepest sorrow I have about this is that in a week, things will be back to "normal" for most of us. I have little if any hope that those in power will see these protests as anything worth changing the world over. Out of fear of losing power, or ignorance about how to change things, or simple denial in the face of our own sin, those with the power to change things for the better won't, and we'll continue as we have. Don't get me wrong – books will be read, songs will be written, Facebook will blow up, but little if anything will change.

We can look at the surface and say that people are racist, or dig a little and see that people are born racist, or deeper yet people are born into cultures that are racist. We can keep digging and see that entire systems – from financial to societal to religious – are racist. But dig to the core and what you'll find is that we as a species are not only racist but sinful. Racism is one aspect of that sin, but it is so much wider than that. It includes all of the -isms (sexism, classism, ageism, etc.) and also all of the evil interactions we have. A woman threatening a harmless black man with police action because she doesn't like him pointing out her misbehavior is racist, but deeper than that, she is sinful. A man and his son hunting down an innocent black man out for a jog and killing him are racist. But so is a church that refuses to sing songs in other languages, or even other styles, because it's not what they enjoy. So is an older pastor who unintentionally reaches for his wallet every time a group of young men walk down the sidewalk loudly. And so is anyone who assumes someone is unable to lead because she is a woman.

You and I are racist, ageist, sexist, and all around sinful, even (or perhaps especially) when those actions are unintentional. The Old Testament sacrificial system had an entire class of sins called "unintentional sins", for the times when we sin and don't even know it. So it is with racism – most of it is unintentional but no less evil. And like with all sins, we have to fight because that's what Jesus did. So how do we fight unintentional behaviors? By making them intentional. Learn what those unintentional behaviors are by reading books about them, watching TV shows and movies about other cultures, and intentionally befriending people with other perspectives than you and asking about it. "What are some things I do or say that you notice are offensive to others?" is a perfect question to discuss over drinks or a campfire or a burger. And after we confront our own racism, we will be in a much better place to begin to work toward confronting the racist systems we've established in this world.

I am just beginning this journey myself. A few years ago, I began reading up on human sexuality so I could understand different viewpoints. Today I begin reading more on racism so I can understand my place in this problem and hopefully begin to address it. It is my first step on this journey and I invite you to join me on it. Got a good book on racism? Pass it along. Want to read together and discuss? Let's do it. Anything you can do to grow in this area is good. The worst thing we could do is to ignore it because it is uncomfortable, and let this world continue to roll along, crushing God's beloved children of other races along the way.

Join us tonight at 7pm in our LCC Virtual Zoom Room (Meeting ID 847 362 3308, psword: lament) for a Night of Prayer and Lament for our world.

