

Racism Reflection December 7, 2020 NSMC Dan Graber

In this time of year when we would hope the world would be at peace and people would treat each other with respect – we are still far from God’s shalom. So please take the time to reflect and pray on this article. What do we and the world need to learn?

Sin of Prejudice Particularly Acute Right Now

By [Megan Briggs](#) May 22, 2020 Church Leaders.com

As the global pandemic drags on, Pastor [Rick Warren](#) believes an old and ubiquitous sin is rearing its ugly head. The Bible refers to this sin as partiality, but we are more familiar with partiality’s synonyms: prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry.

“When people are in a crisis, they often look for scapegoats to blame and they become more wary and even fearful of people not like themselves,” Warren explained in a recent sermon titled “[A Faith That Shows Respect to Everyone](#).”

What Is Partiality?

Warren defines partiality as “showing favoritism and bias toward some people and showing prejudice and bias against other people.”

The pastor of Saddleback Church explained that when people experience stress for a long period of time (like we have been with this pandemic), it tends to “bring out the worst in us.” What’s more, under stress “your natural biases tend to rise...we’re more prejudiced toward other people.” Warren says it’s not surprising that during this time “racial and cultural tensions have actually increased since people are on edge and stressed out.”

Pointing to examples like the killing of [Ahmaud Arbery](#) and the cultural wounds such an incident reopens, Warren said “none of us want to live in that kind of culture” where such an injustice could run unchecked. He also said we should be “fearful for the safety of our brothers and sisters of every color—both in our own church family and in the larger body of Christ.”

As it may be hard to identify prejudice or discrimination in ourselves, Warren gave examples of how this sin might show up in more subtle ways:

- Are you quick to judge others with hairstyles you consider weird?
- How about people with [tattoos](#) or piercings in different parts of their bodies?
- People who are fat or skinny?
- People who dress differently?
- People who have a [different religion](#) than you do?
- Immigrants?
- People who are younger or older than you?
- People who make more or less money than you do?

While we may question the significance of these subtle partialities, Warren emphasizes there’s a reason it’s labeled a sin. “It’s a big deal to God” and that it is the subject of [James chapter 2](#), the Scripture

passage of study for the week. Referring to [Deuteronomy 10:17](#), Warren explains that God is never unfair, never unjust, never prejudiced. And because God is this way, the Bible says in [2 Chronicles 19:7](#), he does not tolerate injustice, partiality, or corruption. In other words, showing favoritism or prejudice is a big deal to God.

Why Does God Hate Partiality So Much?

Warren argues there are at least four reasons God takes the sin of partiality so seriously:

It questions God's creation – it was God's idea to make us all different, Warren explained. You are essentially saying you know better than God when you wish everyone thought like you or looked like you.

It's a sign of ignorance – “If I am prejudiced,” Warren says, “I'm revealing my foolishness-I don't understand God's plan. I don't understand God's purpose. I don't understand God's people.” [1 John 2:11](#) says those who hate their brothers walk around in darkness and don't know where they are going. In contrast, in [James 3:17](#) we're told that true wisdom is free from prejudice and hypocrisy. “Don't call yourself wise if you think people are less or more than you. We're all the same,” Warren emphasized.

It disobeys the Great Commandment – Jesus told us the [Great Commandment](#) is to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. “We're living in a time right now where there's more division and partisanship and angry words than I've known in my lifetime,” Warren said. When the Pharisees asked Jesus who we should consider our neighbors, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, a story, Warren said, which is about racial reconciliation. “The church is to be the answer to racism, sexism, and economic prejudice and every other kind of prejudice,” he argued.

It is a serious sin – The sin of prejudice “makes [God] mad,” Warren says. In [James 2:9](#), it says those who show partiality sin and that God's law condemns such a person as a lawbreaker. As he's traveled in the world, Warren has come to see prejudice as the most prevalent sin.

The Christian Response to Racism and Prejudice

Overcoming this sin of partiality, Warren believes, is [at the heart of the gospel](#). Put another way, “racism is a problem of sin, not of skin.”

The remedy for partiality, Warren believes, is learning to see people as God does. It's difficult because we don't do this naturally. It's something we're going to have to learn and ask God for help with. But Scripture shows us it's possible. Warren gave the example of Peter having his mind changed. Has God shown you, [like he did Peter](#), that “no race is inferior or unclean?” Warren asked.

God's plan to bring people together is the church, Warren believes. “We are called to model unity, reconciliation and fellowship for the rest of the world.” When the world is divided, he argued, the church is called to be united ([1 Corinthians 12:13, 27](#))

No one should understand the necessity of all the parts of a body or family better than the church, Warren implied. He explained that as people, we find our identity in relationships. Warren believes there is a

crisis of identity throughout the world right now because of division and the consequent breakdown of relationships. “When relationships are broken, people don’t know who they are.”

Believers in Christ should have a very firm sense of identity. If you’ve been saved, Warren said, your primary identity is a member of God’s family. “I have more in common with a black female African Christian than I would with a white American male,” Warren explained. “I have more in common with those who are a part of the family of God than I have with people of my own nationality, my own race, my own economic status...because those things aren’t going to last. I’m not always going to be an American, but I’m always going to be in God’s family for trillions and trillions of years.”

While this sense of identity and unity should be the hallmark of Christianity, Warren acknowledged this isn’t always the case. He addressed those who have “been treated unjustly because of your race, because of your age, because of your heritage, because of your sex, because of your economic status,” and told them: “I want you to know that you have a Savior who understands. He was treated unjustly too.”

The sermon is a part of Warren’s series on “Principles for Living Through a Pandemic”, which uses the themes in the book of James as a reference point.