

Am I Prejudiced?

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I am a student of history and I particularly study, and am interested, in World War II history. One of the most embarrassing incidents in U.S. history is, after Pearl Harbor—shortly after—the incarceration of the Japanese Americans. There were, by general account, 127,000 Japanese Americans who were put into prison camps; hastily built prison camps. Their homes were confiscated, they weren't allowed to take but a suitcase or two of their personal belongings per person and when you look back on that, it was all due to prejudice and to fear; but a lot of it was prejudice.

In 1947 Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in professional baseball. I remember watching him in the 1955 World Series. We had just gotten our first TV set and of course, a young kid excited about baseball and watching something live on television was unheard of. I remember him on third base and he was dancing between third base and home, threatening to steal. He was playing for the Berkland Dodgers and driving the Yogi Berra, the catcher for the Yankees and whoever the pitcher was in play at the time, just driving them crazy. In the game I watched, he stole home plate which is almost unheard of. But look what he had to endure, being the first black man to play in the major leagues. Everywhere he went, from hotels to restaurants and to the playing field itself, he had to endure racial slurs, epithets, people threw things at him, people spat on him. To his credit and his character, he did not respond, he didn't yell back, he didn't fight back, he held his head high and went about his business. He answered his detractors with his bat and with his glove, and over time people came to highly respect him as a man and as a ball player.

It's interesting that in January 1997, Vernon Baker was awarded the medal of honor. He was the first black soldier to receive that award. The problem was, Vernon Baker fought in World War II and because of racial prejudice, it took over fifty years to be awarded that metal. Of course, it's no secret, it's been consuming the world over the last several weeks—two or three now—the recent death of a black man under the knee of a policeman. It turns out that the officer and the victim both worked at the same bar. This was a second job for the officer and this week they interviewed the owner of that bar—she was a white lady—and said that officer, under whose knee the black man was, harassed black people continually. He was a bouncer or security guard. While the victim was no saint, as it turns out, nobody deserves to die like that; especially over a \$20 bill—alleged counterfeit bill. Nobody deserves to die like that.

I read a very revealing statement by Gregg Popovich. Sports fans will know his name, he is seventy-one years old and is the longest tenured coach in all of sports. He is the highly esteemed coach of the San Antonio Spurs of the NBA. He's won five NBA championships and is a white man that coaches mostly blacks. He had this to say this last Sunday, when he issued a statement about this incident:

In a strange counter intuitive sort of way, the best teaching moment of this recent tragedy, I think, was is the look on the officer's face. For white people to see how nonchalant, how casual, just about every day going about his job, so much so that he could put his left hand in his pocket, wriggle his knee around a little bit to teach this person some sort of lesson and that it was his right and his duty in his mind to do it. Going on, he says: I think I'm just embarrassed as a white person that this can happen. To actually watch a lynching. We've all seen books and you look in the books and you see black people hanging off trees. I think we've all seen that. Popovich goes on to say: But we just saw it again; I never thought I would see that with my own eyes in real time.

All of us saw those few minutes where a man died under the knee of another human being. These examples that I have just mentioned—and there are obviously many more—are symptomatic of a pervasive, long-standing sin in the world, in this country and sadly even among some of God's people and that is the sin of prejudice. To define our terms, look at Webster's definition of prejudice. It says,

... to have opinions formed without due knowledge or examination; to pre-judge.

Synonyms for 'prejudice' are - *bias, bigotry, partiality.*

Of course, I think most of us would say, "I'm not biased, I'm not prejudiced.". Well, as I have learned in my own life, we need to be really careful, because sometimes we shouldn't be so quick to deny it. Because, if we look inside ourselves all of us can have blind spots. I have had plenty of blind spots in my life. In my almost fifty-five years now in God's church, I've heard prejudicial comments from brethren towards American Indians, Latinos, blacks, toward those not called or toward those in other groups.

Let's ask the question today, each one of us and I'm asking it of myself:

Am I Prejudiced?

That's the title of the sermon. The first point we want to make is:

1. Ancient Israel was a prejudiced nation.

God did not want it that way but Israel became a prejudiced nation. Go to Isaiah 65:1 out of the New King James. If you want to, later you can check Romans 10, because Paul quotes Isaiah 65. Yehovah is speaking and says:

Isaiah 65:1 *I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, Here I am, here I am, To a nation that was not called by My name.*

2) I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, According to their own thoughts;

- 3) *A people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face; Who sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense on altars of brick;*
4) *Who sit among the graves, and spend the night in the tombs; Who eat swine's flesh [a lot of religious people eat swine's flesh today], And the broth of abominable things is in their vessels; (KJV)*

All manner of food in a jambalaya so to speak.

- 5) *Who say [we're getting to the point], Keep to yourself, do not come near me, For I am holier than you! [Yehovah's response to that] These are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day. (KJV)*

What is happening is, those people, this nation, is looking down on others because they're not like us and they don't meet our standards. Therefore, they are inferior and we are superior. Of course, that was carried over to the disciples because they came out of that culture. Go to Galatians 2:11 out of the New King James; Paul is writing about an encounter with other apostles, including Peter.

Galatians 2:11 *Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;*

12) *for before certain men came from James, he [meaning Peter] would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came [these Jews from Jerusalem], he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.*

13) *And the rest of the Jews [at Antioch] also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.*

14) *But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? (KJV)*

We see in Peter's case; old prejudices die hard. God used Peter to open up, as we are going to see in a minute, the Gospel to the Gentiles. Yet these prejudices and the opinions of others sometimes cause these old prejudices of ours to have a very hard, very long, very slow death.

This first point is pointing out the fact— and there are many other examples we could use, but for the sake of time, just these—Israel and the Jews were extremely prejudiced. At the time of Christ if a Jew's sleeve touched a Gentile, he would go home and wash himself and his clothes because he was now unclean and polluted. We have established that prejudice existed in ancient Israel, existed at the time of Christ.

Let's go to the second point now and establish: —

2. There is great prejudice in every nation.

Of course, that is coming out today, but it has been long simmering over the decades, over the centuries, over the millennia. Since we don't have time to look at every nation, let's just look at the United States; some of it applies to Canada or Australia. It applies to all nations, but let's just look at the United States. There's even a geographical prejudice. We have the whole issue of the North and the South. Even today, 150 years after the Civil War, we have some people still fighting the Civil War. You see people draped in Confederate flags walking around. NASCAR just recently had to deal with that and they are banning people wearing the Confederate flag into NASCAR races whenever they have fans admitted again. We are still fighting the North to the South and there is prejudice on both sides.

Of course, geographically you have the prejudice—all southerners are red necks, all Californians are fruitcakes and Mid-Westerners are hayseeds. They have a stalk of hay sticking out of their mouths and the list goes on and on. Prejudice just by where you grew up.

Prejudice against other nations, especially after World War II. I don't want to honor or bring note to the prejudicial names used to describe Japanese, Germans and Italians that all came out of the time of World War II. At the time of the Vietnamese war there was prejudice against the Vietnamese. I had a roommate at Texas A&M. It was all male and all military and in my senior year we thought most of us would be going to Vietnam—he did go to Vietnam—and he said before he left (he was going to be a pilot) that he just wanted to kill gooks. Who are they? What are their families like and what are their lives like? That is just a built-in prejudice. If you can demean the people that you are going to kill then it doesn't hurt so bad sometimes.

There's prejudice between men and women. Some men think women are to be dominated, subjugated and abused and they look down on them. After the women's lib movement there are some women who think all men are evil and they don't want anything to do with them. So, it runs both ways.

Then, of course, there is prejudice between the races and I will not repeat the racial epithets going back and forth over the decades that we have all heard. Of course, after 9/11, there were racial epithets against those of Middle Eastern descent. Many of whom—most of whom, the vast majority—who had nothing to do with what happened on 9/11. Then we have prejudice over wealth. People who don't have money look with disdain on the wealthy and say we're poor folks and we're proud of it. As though the wealth pollutes those who have it, so they look down upon on them. The opposite is very true as well; people who have money look down on those who don't as somehow inferior. The poster child for that is a woman named Leona Helmsley and if you were functioning in the '70's and '80's you would remember her name. She grew up poor in New York state and she became a fairly successful real estate agent in New York city. She married a New York City real estate tycoon in 1972 and as a result of that marriage she became the public face of his financial empire which included some very high-end hotels—very prestigious high-end hotels and she managed the best one in his empire. She became the public face of that; she flaunted her wealth and it turned out she was a

despotic boss. She would fire people for the tiniest infraction. She was known as the “queen of mean” and she had a mean streak, no question about it. She openly stated regarding her status and that of her husband, “only the little people pay taxes”. Of course, that and her activities financially, came to the attention of the New York State Attorney General and after a trial she served eighteen months in prison for tax evasion. The fact is, she was the poster child for those who have money looking down on those who don’t.

The church is not immune to this. There has been prejudice, in some cases, by the ministry toward the brethren, calling them ‘dumb sheep’. I’m not saying that’s a majority but it did happen. Within the ministry, I have personally witnessed, as have others, prejudice towards those who did not graduate from Ambassador College, those who were not hired full time in the ministry as though they were somehow a second-class Christian or minister. We have seen instances within the church when ministry and members looked down on those not called and derided them.

I remember a sermon—this goes back decades—at a time when the church taught the end was coming very soon and the minister was flying out of a city in Canada and as he took off he looked down at the city and said to himself, “see you later suckers”. Talking about the people in that city because, in his view, it was only a matter of time when they were going to be nuked or suffer horribly. Because they weren’t called, they were worthy of that suffering.

Today we have prejudice against those who look down on others because they are not part of the group that they are in. There are some leaders who do not allow their brethren to communicate with those of other groups. You might have a father or a mother or a son or daughter in a different group and you cannot communicate with them. Thankfully it’s rare but it does happen. A couple years ago I got an email from a man who asked to be removed from receiving the Prayer Update. The reason being he would not pray for anybody who was part of Pacific. That we are not worthy of his prayers. Even though all of us are baptized, all of us are part of the body of Christ, but because you are not in my group, you are not worthy of my time to pray for you.

With that in mind go to James 2 and see the overriding principle of all of this. James 2:1, we are talking about prejudice being pervasive everywhere and James is obviously talking to the church then and to us now.

James 2:1 *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.* (KJV)

Don’t do that, he says.

2) For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; (KJV)

We would say today, a homeless person pushing a grocery cart.

- 3) *And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing [this is King James English and my, how meanings of words change over the decades; come wearing bright clothing, modern clothing], and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:*
- 4) *Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?*
- 5) *Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*
- 6) *But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?*
- 7) *Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?*
- 8) *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*
- 9) *But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. (KJV)*

We don't want to be there; we don't want to go there. The fact is, Satan has seen to it that prejudice is pervasive throughout the world and if we are not careful it can come into our lives and into the lives of the church.

Now let's look at a third point, we have four altogether, but let's look at a third point because we want to look at:

3. The potential causes of prejudices.

How does prejudice infect a nation or a culture or an individual? The first one, A if you like to outline is:

3A. We were taught that way.

That's obvious and logical. Many of us have been taught that way. I grew up in West Texas and my Mom's family grew up in East Texas and of course East Texas was part of the Confederacy. My grandmother's home was in a little town outside of Austin, Texas; a lot of farming and cotton raised and there was a large population of black folks, many of whom worked in the cotton fields. This is in the 1940's and '50's. We would go there for two to four weeks in the summer to stay with my grandmother and my mom would be there. She had a two-story home in that little town and had a part time maid and cook and she also had a part time gardener, both of whom were black. I remember at about six or seven years old, I loved to talk to the cook and the gardener because they had interesting stories. The black woman, who was the cook had a great sense of humor and would slip us a piece of pie or cookie which we dearly loved. I remember after we got there one summer—just my first memory—it was hot and humid with no air conditioning then. The houses were designed with a screened in porch in the back and that's where you ate your main meal which was the noon meal and it was hot. When you are a child you don't pay much attention to that. This black cook served the meal

and we started eating and I looked out in the backyard through the screen and she and the gardener were sitting under a tree by themselves eating. I remember like it was yesterday because I asked my mom “Why they don’t come in and sit with us? Why are they there by themselves, they are part of the household, why don’t they come and sit with us?”. She said, “That’s just the way we do things”. I said, “but mom we like them and they are fun to be around, why can’t they come and eat with us?” Then I got the standard answer, “Shut up and eat your peas”. So, you do, but that was my first introduction to that. It was taught, you see. That’s how it started.

I remember, I went to Texas A&M which is north of Houston about ninety miles in that same general area and in my senior year, Texas A&M at that time was all male, all military and all white—no women. There were 5000-6000 cadets. During my senior year, at the start, two black freshmen cadets were admitted; never happened before. A&M had been in existence over 100 years—it had never happened before. The first year at A&M was basically a yearlong boot camp with physical hazing, mental hazing, emotional hazing and you were berated and screamed at and yelled at. These two black boys - it was just unbelievable what they had to endure; racial epithets, about their parents, their grandparents and all of that. It was just brutal. They were horribly persecuted. I was a senior at the time and they weren’t in my outfit or dorm. I saw that, I heard about it and one night I just decided that I am going to go visit these two. So, I went into their dorm at night, nobody was around, I had previously found their room. The rooms had to be open for freshmen, so I walked in—a senior walks in—and they popped to attention and I put them at ease and said I just want to talk to you a minute. I said “I know you are going through a rough time and I can’t even imagine what you’re going through, but please understand, there are cadets here and men here that are behind you. We don’t want to see you kicked out, we don’t want you to quit and we want you to succeed. So just understand and know that”. What else can you say? They were two scared, young cadets right out of high school and it was a sad thing; it was really a sad thing.

We are talking about how we learn prejudice and of course the cadets—the senior class and all three upper classes, there was great racial prejudice at that time. Not with everybody but enough to make it difficult.

I was in Detroit in 1967. I had a job after I got out of the Air Force and that’s when the racial riots occurred in Detroit. Similar to what was happening earlier a couple weeks ago here in the United States. But there were tanks going down the streets in Detroit. During those riots, which covered many days, forty-three people were killed, over a thousand injured, over 7200 arrests and more than 2000 buildings destroyed. Certain parts of Detroit were just gutted and there was open hostility between the races; you could cut it with a knife. Both blacks and whites had to be very, very careful. Law abiding ones had to be very, very careful. At that time, for the safety of everyone, the Detroit church had to be segregated for everyone’s safety. I had just started giving sermonettes in 1969 and I think it was my second or third sermonette and I spoke at the black church. So, I walked in and they were just a riot—loved being around them because they were so humorous and funny and made you feel welcome. I walked in,

got settled and then got up to speak. At that moment I looked out and realized that I was the only white person in that room. I think there were, 200-300 black folks and I am the only white guy, I was the minority. I got a little taste that day of what it was like to be a black man in a white man's world—I was a white man in a black man's world and I got a little taste of that. It gave me a different perspective. The fact is, prejudice runs both ways because I met a young couple there, they were newly married—a black couple at the black church—and the next time I spoke they asked why don't I come to dinner with them and I said that I would love to. So, after services I said I will follow you and he said, "no you better not do that. You ride in our car and leave your car in the parking lot and we'll bring you back after it's over with." We took off for his neighborhood and as we got close, he looked in the back seat and said maybe you ought to scooch down a little in the seat. So, we pulled up in front of their house. It was a two-story white shingled home; it was a larger home turned into apartments and they had an apartment there. He said to stay in the car while they got the apartment open. He said "stay here until I come for you". He came out on the porch and looked up and down the street, waited a few minutes and then motioned to me and I got out of the car and quickly ran into the apartment.

We had a great dinner, wonderful time and I asked what was going on? He said that there were people in this neighborhood and if they knew I was eating dinner with a white man, we would have trouble. I would have people on our front step, knocking on our front door so we just need to be careful. We had a great time. We went through the procedure again, looking both ways, running out to the car, ducking down and I finally got back in my car and went home. Prejudice runs both ways.

If parents are prejudiced, it's likely the children will be prejudiced. Josh Billings was an American humorist who lived in the 1800's and he said something profound:

Wisdom has never made a bigot, but learning has.

It reminds me of the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation in Exodus 20. One generation learns it and it gets passed down to subsequent generations. One way we become prejudiced is we are taught that way.

3B. A second cause of prejudice is a "they are not one of us" syndrome.

Because they are not like us or one of us, then we can be prejudice toward them. There are those who wanted to kill Jesus Christ. They wanted to toss Him off the top of a hill. We won't go there; it is in Luke 4. They wanted to do so because He taught something different and thereby became "not one of them". They were so angry they wanted to kill Him. Let's go to Luke 9:49 and see something interesting. The word is applicable today. I'm going to read this out of the New Living Translation. This is an example of "not one of us" syndrome.

Luke 9:49 *John said to Jesus, Master, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop [why?] because he isn't in our group."* (NLT)

They tried to stop him because he wasn't one of them. Christ's response in verse 50.

50) *But Jesus said, Don't stop him! Anyone who is not against you is for you."*

51) *As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*

52) *He sent messengers ahead to a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival.*

53) *But the people of the village did not welcome Jesus because he was on his way to Jerusalem. (NLT)*

He's not one of us, He's not a Samaritan, He's going down there to that evil place, Jerusalem.

54) *When James and John ... (NLT)*

James and John are known as the sons of thunder and for a reason.

54 continued) *... saw this, they said to Jesus, Lord, should we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?" (NLT)*

Just because they didn't want to hear what Jesus had to say or they weren't part of that group.

55) *But Jesus turned and rebuked them. (NLT)*

Because they aren't with us, they can be objects of prejudice; they could be suspect and then objects of prejudice. That's something we need to be careful about.

A third reason for a cause of prejudice is:

3C. Lack of humility.

So much trouble in life goes back to a lack of humility. Let's go to Luke 18:9; Christ is speaking a parable for a reason.

Luke 18:9 *And he [speaking of Christ] spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: (KJV)*

That is prejudice, when you despise another person or group.

10) *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

11) *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself ... (KJV)*

It's interesting, Luke's turn of phrase here; I take that as meaning his prayer never went any higher than his head.

11 continued) ... *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are [meaning I am better than they are], extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*
12) *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* (KJV)

Now contrast that with a publican in verse 13.

13) *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*
14) *I tell you; this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* (KJV)

Prejudice involves us exalting ourselves above another individual or another group because they are not like us or they are not with us or not part of us. Therefore, they become or can become, in our eyes, inferior.

What else did Christ teach about humility. We won't turn there but in the sermon on the Mount, beginning in Matthew 7, what did Christ say? He said, best get the beam out of your own eye before you try to remove the speck out of your brother's eye—just a note of humility. Before we criticize, before we condemn or prejudice, let's look at ourselves. And the point is, when we get down to it, our Father called the weak of the world—we know that in 1 Corinthians 1—how can any of us feel superior? Go to 1 Peter 4:18 and see what Peter had to say about that. This is something we need to keep in mind continually.

1 Peter 4:18 *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* (KJV)

The Greek word for *scarcely*—Thayer says, “with difficulty, not easily or very rarely”. If the righteous are very rarely saved or with great difficulty saved, then how can we, who have yet to be saved in the end result, feel superior to anybody? As we have seen, there are many causes of prejudice; many, many causes.

Let's go to the fourth and final point for the rest of the sermon. We have seen that Satan provokes prejudice; he infects the world with prejudice.

4. Our Father's way is different.

Meaning different from being prejudicial. He sent His Son to be an example of treating all people equally. In Luke 7:36. out of the New Living Translation is interesting.

Luke 7:36 *One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat.*

37) *When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. (NLT)*

As we read in the context, the woman was likely to be or had been a prostitute but came there because of Christ's teachings. She was moved by those teachings.

38) *Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. (NLT)*

It was common practice in those days, to recline while eating. There was a low table, you face the table but you're reclining on one elbow so therefore your knees were bent and your feet were behind you. So, she came up behind Him, weeping because she was obviously deeply repentant about who she was and who she had been.

38 continued) *... Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. (NLT)*

Kissing the feet is not a Jewish practice. So therefore, we can likely conclude that she was a Gentile. You put yourself in her place, this is probably all she knew to do. She was repentant, she was sorrowful and didn't know what else to do but to buy some perfume, come in and anoint His feet and then she started crying and then kissing His feet. We are not told how she got into the house. I doubt a Pharisee would willingly let her in but somehow, she got into the house. We are just not told.

39) *When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She s a sinner!"*

40) *Then Jesus answered his thoughts [being the Prophet He was]. Simon," he said to the Pharisee, I have something to say to you." Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied.*

41) *Then Jesus told him this story: A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other.*

42) *But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?"*

43) *Simon answered, I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt." That s right," Jesus said.*

44) *Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.*

45) *You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet.*

46) *You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.*

- 47) *I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.*
48) *Then Jesus said to the woman, Your sins are forgiven.*
49) *The men at the table said among themselves, Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?* (NLT)

These may have been other Pharisees.

50) *And Jesus said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* (NLT)

We see that Christ didn't demean the woman because of her sins, He didn't look down on her and he treated the Pharisee and the woman on an equal basis and set us that example.

Go to Luke 15:1 out of the NIV. Here is another example of Christ treating people with equality.

Luke 15:1 *Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear Jesus.* (NIV)

These were the people that the religious leaders would have nothing to do with.

- 2) *But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.*
3) *Then Jesus told them this parable:*
4) *Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?*
5) *And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders*
6) *and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.*
7) *I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.* (NIV)

Christ treated all equally because He knew that all humans—all humanity—are His brothers and His sisters. He treated them as such. Now let's go to Luke 19:1

Luke 19:1 *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.*
2) *And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans [the tax collectors], and he was rich.* (KJV)

He was a wealthy pagan and Gentile.

3) *And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. [He was a small man.]*

4) *And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree ... (KJV)*

If you do any study of Luke, it is interesting the detail that Luke gives. It just points to the fact that Luke was an eye witness because somebody who was not an eye witness, why would they say this?

4 continued) ... *to see him: for he was to pass that way.*

5) *And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. (KJV)*

I want to come and visit you.

6) *And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.*

7) *And when they saw it, they all murmured [these were the religious leaders in the day], saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. (KJV)*

How dare He do that! He's not one of us because He would go do that.

8) *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

9) *And Jesus said unto him, this day is salvation come to this house [why?], forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. (KJV)*

Christ is referring to Himself, being a son of Abraham.

10) *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (KJV)*

We see here very clearly that Christ was not a respecter of persons. Now go to John 4:5

John 4:5 *Then cometh he [Christ] to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar [that's at the foot of Mount Gerizim], near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. (KJV)*

When the Northern Ten Tribes were taken captive and moved out of the land by the Assyrians, they shipped in other captive people as was their custom, to settle the land so that people were in a strange land and less apt to revolt. These conquered people, who were pagans, came into the northern part of the Promised Land and set up a pagan temple at Mount Gerizim.

6) *Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour [it was noon, the heat of the day].*

7) *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, give me to drink. (KJV)*

No Jew would even think of drinking from the cup of a Samaritan—any Samaritan, man or woman.

8) *(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

9) *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, how is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. (KJV)*

This Samaritan woman—or man—was viewed by the Jews as unclean from birth, according to the Talmud. A Jewish man would not carry on a public conversation with any woman, much less a Samaritan woman. That was just not done.

10) *Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

11) *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?*

12) *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? (KJV)*

The Assyrians didn't take all of the Israelites out—the Northern Ten Tribes—they couldn't get everybody so when these pagans moved in there began to be a syncretism between their pagan religion and the extant religion of Israel. It became polluted and perverted and all mixed up together. You can see this woman, over the decades and centuries, viewed herself and her heritage as part of this land and Jacob being part of that.

13) *Jesus answered and said unto her, whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:*

14) *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

15) *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. (KJV)*

I won't have to come here to draw anymore.

16) *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.*

17) *The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, thou hast well said, I have no husband:*

18) *For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. (KJV)*

It's interesting also that she was by herself. She was not in a group of other women and that's probably because of her immorality; the other women would not want to have anything to do with her. That's my speculation, but it seems logical to me.

19) *The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. [That's the understatement of all times.]*

20) *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*

21) *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. (KJV)*

No question about who was being worshipped here.

22) *Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.*

23) *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. (KJV)*

That was true then, it is true today.

24) *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (KJV)*

James Smyda touched on that in his last sermon.

25) *Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.*

26) *Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. (KJV)*

So, we see that Jesus Christ, like His Father, is not a respecter of persons.

Now we are going to look at a time when the Father had to perform a miracle to teach the New Testament church that all are equal in His sight. It took a miracle to do that. Go to Acts 10:9. I am eliminating the first eight verses for time's sake; but we will come back and talk about that.

Acts 10:9 *On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, [this was Joppa] Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: [that was about noon]*

10) *And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,*

11) *And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:*

12) *Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.*

13) *And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.*

14) *But Peter said, not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common [the Greek means “defiled” or “unholy”] or unclean. (KJV)*

Obviously, these animals were unclean.

15) *And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.*

16) *This was done thrice: (KJV)*

Obviously for great emphasis and Peter was familiar with that because Christ said to him three time, feed My sheep, feed My lambs and obviously I’m sure Peter would have remembered that.

16 continued) *... and the vessel was received up again into heaven.*

17) *Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,*

18) *And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. (KJV)*

Cornelius was a centurion which means he was commander of 100 soldiers. In the first eight verses of the chapter, an angel told him to seek out Peter so he sent a delegation to Joppa.

19) *While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.*

20) *Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.*

21) *Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?*

22) *And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.*

23) *Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.*

24) *And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. (KJV)*

Caesarea and Joppa are both on the Mediterranean coast, about thirty miles apart so they split the journey into two day, fifteen miles a day which is doable.

24 continued) *... And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.*

25) *And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. (KJV)*

Notice Peter's reaction.

26) *But Peter took him up, saying, stand up; I myself also am a man. (KJV)*

Not allowing another man to worship him. I wish everybody had that same attitude.

27) *And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.*

28) *And he [referring to Peter] said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; [as a Jew I'm not supposed to be doing this] but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. (KJV)*

Now the vision was clear. Go now to verse 34 out of the New King James.

34) *Then Peter opened his mouth and said: In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.*

35) *But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. (NKJV)*

Verse 44.

44) *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.*

45) *And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. (NKJV)*

It took a miracle to convince the Jews that all humans are equal in God's sight, all humans will have an opportunity for salvation and obviously the message for all of us is that we should treat and interact with all people equally. The question is—we have to answer, looking to our future—would God allow somebody who is prejudice to be a teacher in the world tomorrow? Somebody who had just even an itty-bitty bit of prejudice. Would He allow a person like that—male or female, makes no difference—race—doesn't make any difference—color of skin doesn't make any difference—national origin, doesn't make any difference—would He allow somebody who has prejudice be a teacher in the world tomorrow? We have to ask that question.

God watches us on a daily basis, looking at our thoughts, looking at our words, at our deeds and how we treat people to see if we treat all people as brothers and sisters. We are all God's children.

Galatians 3:26 *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (KJV)*

We know ultimately that all people will have the opportunity to understand the Father and His Son, have the opportunity to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and therefore

all human creation are children of God. Who created the races? Who gave the races their characteristics? We know God created the races but I believe He gave some of His talents to each race. Some people don't believe that and, in the world, certainly. When you look at the black people, they have a talent for music like no other race. Those little kids come out of the womb jiving; they love music, they love dancing, they're talented with music. You can just see them in the way they dance, the way they move, whereas us whites are uptight and straight but they have a fluidity to their movements and their music. The same with athletics; you look at the major sports teams and the majority of them are made up of black athletes. They have a sense of humor. Despite the heritage of slavery, they have managed to have a sense of humor.

I remember my wife and I met a black family in Vail and we bumped into them several times during that Feast and we got to know them and every time we bumped into them it was just a hoot. My wife and the Mama were going back and forth laughing and giggling and it was a joy; it made the Feast such a joy.

The Asians and the Indians—the Eastern Indians from India—they have an affinity for classical music, in part because of the complexity of the music and the intricacy of the music; many noted classical musicians are of Indian descent or Asian descent. They are intelligent and they excel at science and math. I guess you have all heard of the Bose Company—the Bose headphones and speakers—the head of that company, the man who founded it, is Amar Bose and was a native of India and a professor at MIT. I was in Detroit at the time managing a stereo store and this imposing Indian man walked in—black hair, slightly graying, penetrating eyes, big guy—with a speaker under his arm and stuck out his hand and said,

“I'm Amar Bose and I have a proposition for you. I have this new development. My team at MIT has developed this speaker and I'm taking it to the top five dealers around the country and if all five say yes, I'm going to start a company and we're going to make it. I would like to see if you would like to be part of that.”

I said, let me listen to it; so, we spent the rest of the day together and our company decided that we were going to jump on this. The other four dealers scattered around the country—Los Angeles, New York, Chicago—jumped on it and that began a friendship with Amar Bose over the years. I was awestruck at his intelligence, his perception, his ability to grasp concepts—I'm making the point that God gave some of His gifts to the Orientals and to the Indians about intelligence, perceptivity, excelling at math and science and so on.

Growing up in West Texas, there were a lot of American Indians in West Texas and they have a love of the earth. They have a respect for the land. They are incredible artists, many of them. They would color grains of sand different colors and then would sand paint and take a handful of colored sand and paint with it. Some of their sand paintings are just astounding; some of their pottery and paintings on walls and caves and such. God gave them a gift. God has given some of His characteristics to each race so who are we to look down on others who are different to us? If we are prejudice

towards other races and people, we criticize God's plan and design. 1 Peter 1:17 is a very fundamental scripture.

1 Peter 1:17 *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:*
(KJV)

Our Father has no respect of persons. So, we see in this final point, that our Father's way is indeed different from the world's way and from Satan's way, Satan, who provokes prejudice and looking down on others.

Now let's close. A wise man once said,

"A prejudice is the easiest thing in the world to acquire, but the hardest thing in the world to get rid of."

That is so true; Satan provokes prejudice in all humans. In our lives, it's our responsibility, if we grew up that way and were taught that way, to break that chain of prejudice by not allowing our prejudice to become part of our character. Our job now, is to transform ourselves into the image of Jesus Christ who had no prejudice and who treated all equally. We have to do that before the end of our days, before our judgment time is over. You remember what Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount.

"You've heard of old time that you should love your neighbor but hate your enemy, but I tell you, you need to love your enemies. Love those who persecute you, love those who speak evil of you, love those who spitefully use you—why? So, you can be the children of your Father."

If we are to love our enemies, should we not love those from other countries, other races, that we don't even know? If we are supposed to love our enemies that we do know, should we not love other people who are not our enemies but don't know them yet? Shouldn't we be open to love them? They are our Father's children also. The point is, there is no place in God's church for prejudice of any kind.

None of us are intentionally prejudice, but if you are like me you can have blind spots. I've had blind spots that I'm embarrassed about now. Another wise man said,

"Some men change their minds while others rearrange their prejudices."

We don't want to be part of that. It comes down, as we keep learning over and over, to the two great commandments. Love our Father with all our being, all our might and He was the one who created the nations, He created the races, for His pleasure and the second great commandment is to love our neighbor as yourself. The way to do that is found in this one final scripture, Philippians 2:3; this is how we love our neighbor and by extension all humanity is our neighbor—inside the church, outside the church. This is the way to do it. This is out of the New King James.

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but [this is how everything should be done] in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself ... (NKJV)*

If we have that degree of humility, we will have no prejudice. We will treat others better than ourselves. In that environment, prejudice has no foothold, it has no soil in which to grow. Prejudices are generally against people and our Father created all people. The different races, the different nations, the different colors of skin. I believe He did so in part, as a test to see if we can love those who are different from us. Now in this situation we are in, we should all look forward to a time when we can know and teach and love all peoples of all nations and all races.