JUSTICE or JUST US?

SESSION 4

COULD IT BE ME?

Scripture Passages

When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

Luke 4:16-22

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?"

Matthew 26:17-22

Key Ideas from the Video

What Jesus did in Nazareth that day was a well-calculated move. He was attacking a religious culture that was okay with a society in which all people were not treated the same. Jesus shows that we must be awakened to such realities in order to change them. Faithfully following Jesus today we can be awakened to the realities of racism and begin to work for change because we believe Black lives matter.

Just because it's not your fault doesn't mean it's not your responsibility. We might assume that because this problem existed long before us, then we are somehow free from the responsibilities of changing a system that negatively affects so many. We each have to make a decision whether we will attempt to absolve ourselves, or if we will insert ourselves into the situation, taking responsibility for eradicating a suppressive system of racism.

Racism is not the acts of hatred or violence. Its more than bigotry and narrow-mindedness. Racism is a social construct that treats people differently. That favors one race over another. It's about power. This is a time when followers of Jesus are asked to display the highest virtue of discipleship: to be convinced we are not a part of the problem and still ask anyway, "Could I be the one? Could I be a carrier? Lord, is it I?"

Be ready for resistance. Whenever God's people begin to work to change systems and structures of injustice, someone is not going to like it. Some people will be angry, some people will be resistant, and others just may be plain disinterested. You will inevitably come to a place where you will say, "This is HARD WORK," and you'll be right. But keep moving anyway. Keep studying anyway. Keep leading anyway. Because when we follow the rocky, hard, and resistant path toward justice, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Our hope for you is that you would decide to insert yourself and even your congregation as an answer to this problem. We owe it to ourselves and to the next generation to ensure that equality and justice are not an exception, but an expectation. This should be important to us because it is important to God. In the character of God and through the life of Jesus Christ, we see a faith that has always been concerned with justice.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Do you think that the story [about the husband and wife trying to lose weight] provides a good correlation to racial issues in our country today? Why or why not?
- Go back to the story of Jesus in Nazareth. Why do you think the people reacted so violently to the idea of God's grace being extended to Gentiles? Do you think they were capable of changing their views?
- Why is it so hard to see ourselves as part of the problem?
- What stumbling blocks have prevented or prevent you from being a part of the solution?
- What will change in your life or in your church if you accept responsibility for changing the problem of racism?
- If I experienced discrimination simply for being who God made me to be, what would I want to see and hear from my church?
- What am I going to do as a result of this study? How will I be anti-racist?