



2.1.26...Is God Racist or Hospitable? | Genesis 9:18-27, Joshua 10:40-42

“Well, for once, the rich, white man is in control.”

A quote from the Simpson’s movie from 2007, made by Charles Montgomery Burn, the owner of the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant.

Not a fan of the Simpsons, me neither? Over 35 years ago, William R Jones wrote a book titled, Is God a White Racist?

And the British pop singer and songwriter Lily Allen asks in her 2009 single about God. Asks, “Do you think his favorite type of person is Caucasian?”

Atheist Richard Dawkins doesn't ask a question, but states categorically that the God of the Old Testament is racist.

And then David Lamb, author of the book that we're leaning on for this sermon series, at one time served on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

College kids struggled with seeing God as racist.

We may not struggle with this question. But this question is real and serious people wrestle with it.

Is God racist? Before we dive into one of the main texts in the Old Testament that seem to raise this question, we need to be clear about definitions.

If we define racism to simply mean prejudice based on distinguishing between the different primary races as in Europeans, Africans, and Asian, it would be hard to find examples of racism in the Old Testament.

Because everyone at that time was of the same racial stock.

However, if we broaden it, to include prejudice based on nationality and ethnicity we find many texts that seem at first, very prejudicial and racist.

And then secondly, in Genesis, God lays a foundation not only for a biblical understanding of gender but also of race. God created women and men and commissioned them to be fruitful and multiply. And they did.

So that, over time, nations and distinct people groups were formed. All of whom are image-bearers, all of whom reflect the divine image of God.

Just to be clear...God created all people and ethnicities, God is not racist. We within the United Methodist Church categorically resist racism. Genesis affirms ultimately that all nations are related to each other. Meaning we are all family.

The fact that we are all related to one another should sufficiently undermine racial prejudice.

So far, God is not racist. But now let's look at a key area in the Old Testament that seems as if God is racist, from Genesis 9:18-27.

After the flood, Noah becomes drunk and passes out naked in his tent.

Then Ham the youngest and the father of Canaan, dishonors him by exposing his shame to Ham's two older brothers. Shem and Japheth respond with respect, by covering their father's nakedness carefully, not looking, and letting him sleep off his hangover.

When Noah awakens and finds out what Ham did, in rage he curses Canaan (the son of Ham) but blesses Shem and Japheth with, "**The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.**" And later, "**May Canaan be the slave of Shem.**"

And here is the root that seems to condone slavery in the Bible.

It is called the "Ham's curse" and is relevant because Christians used it to justify slavery. See slavery is in the Bible.

Some people believed that Ham's descendants were African and Japheth and Shem's descendants were thought to be European.

How convenient, yuk!

Which for some made God look like a racist.

But this curse of Noah on Canaan never justified slavery for three reasons:

One, this story is too bizarre to draw anything helpful from. And especially in trying to create some kind of justification or theology for slavery.

Second, the curse was not uttered by Yahweh but Noah.

Third, the curse only targeted Canaan, Ham's son, not Ham or his other offspring. The curse only lasted for one generation, so to expand slavery beyond that is absurd.

In truth, Old Testament regulated slavery, to limit its harm in a broken world, while always pointing to freedom.

Always moving humanity in a redemptive direction fulfilled in the good news of Jesus. Leading us to this glorious sense of identity from Galatians 3:26 -28

So, in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

This text establishes our primary identity, value and worth in Christ not on gender, ethnicity, or station in life.

Okay, back to the Old Testament.

The fact that Yahweh delivered the Israelites from Egypt proves God does not condone slavery.

And that the Old Testament refers to Israel's deliverance hundreds of times proves God didn't want Israel to forget that God does not condone slavery.

Therefore, slavery cannot be blamed on God, the Old Testament or even Noah but laid squarely at the feet of racists.

If God is not racist, how then is God hospitable?

One way that God showed his hospitality was the mercy he showed Israelite's enemies. By noting and remembering that every Canaanite person or nation that showed mercy to Israel was delivered.

We've talked about Rahab a Canaanite and prostitute from Jericho, who welcomed two spies into her home. And because she did, her and her entire family were rescued.

The Gibeonites, who were a subset of the Canaanites, welcomed and fed their Israelite neighbors. So, they were saved.

When a man from the city of Bethel in Canaan, helped a different set of Israelite spies, he and his entire family were spared.

And after Israel established a monarchy with Saul as their first king, they did not destroy the Kenites, living among the Canaanites. They would not be destroyed because they had been kind to Israel.

Each of these groups of people who acted hospitably toward Israel was spared from the conquest. Yahweh showed mercy to foreigners who expressed hospitality towards Israel.

And God commanded his own people to practice hospitality towards foreigners and gave them many laws to show that hospitality, to establish justice for the foreigners.

Some of these laws stood in direct opposition to any kind of "separate but equal" way of treating the foreigners, which is racist.

America knows how well that worked out for us with segregation in the 60's.

Israel was supposed to treat foreigners just like other Israelites. Leviticus chapter 24 verse 22 reads, **“You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the Lord your God.”**

And from Numbers chapter 9 verse 14, **“A foreigner residing among you is also to celebrate the Lord’s Passover in accordance with its rules and regulations. You must have the same regulations for both the foreigner and the native-born.”**

Other laws went beyond simply treating foreigners as equals, including this one given by Moses from Deuteronomy 10:17-19:

¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. ¹⁸ He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. ¹⁹ And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

Moses's declaration here is probably the strongest text you will find in the Old Testament proving God is not racist but pro foreigners.

God executes justice for the foreigner, defends them and loves the foreigner living as neighbors to the Israelites. God gave them food and clothing.

And God commands Israel to do the same. Israelites are to seek justice for, defend, love, feed and clothe the foreigners living around them. Because God will take care of all of us.

And when God’s people forgot or refused to love the foreigner, God punished them. Saying this is not “okay”. I am serious about this. You must love the foreigners.

How timely for us. This reminder from Scripture, we are to love the foreigner because God loves the foreigner, because we were foreigners once, because God commands it of us.

Let’s bring in the New Testament.

Mentioning again the genealogy in Matthew chapter 1 that we all skip past and gloss over.

In Jesus’ genealogy I have mentioned that four women are included, which is very rare...another affirmation of women.

But more to the point of this morning, all four of the women included in Jesus’ genealogy and therefore contributing DNA to Jesus...were all foreigners. Tamar and Rahab were both Canaanites. Ruth was a Moabite and Bathsheba was probably a Hittite.

Meaning Jesus, God the Son, was not 100% of the Jewish race, not pure blooded. The very beginning of the New Testament highlights Jesus’ foreign ancestry. Huh?

Lamb concludes with, **“If God were racist he would not have included foreign women into his family and then have them listed prominently in his son’s family tree.”**

And Jesus also loved foreigners.

In Luke 4, Luke mentions the widow and Elijah. In John 4, Jesus interacts with a foreign woman at a well. In Mark 7, Jesus heals the daughter of a foreigner.

In Matthew 11, Jesus became so enraged that his people had made it hard for foreigners to worship in the Temple that he drove the moneychangers out with a whip.

Racism and immigration continues to be big issues facing our country.

We know the time slot from eleven to noon for most churches, worship on Sunday morning is still one of the most segregated hours in American.

As we wrap this up, how might we grow as compassionate people who shun racism just like our heavenly Father commands?

Keep talking about it.

Listen to stories that make you uncomfortable.

Examine who has access, voice, and leadership.

Ask where fear—not faith—is shaping our reactions.

So, the question is not “*Is God racist?*” Scripture answers that clearly: **no**.

The deeper question is whether we are willing to reflect the heart of the God we claim to follow. A God who loves the foreigner. A God who shows no partiality. A God who welcomed outsiders into His family and commands we do the same.

If we were once strangers and God made room for us, then faithfulness today looks like making room for others. This is not about winning arguments or red versus blue. It is about living the gospel.

May we love as we have been loved. Amen.

Time of Reflection

1. Where might God be inviting me to see—or love—someone I’ve unconsciously kept at a distance?
2. What would it look like for our faith to reflect God’s hospitality this week?