

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

April 25, 2021

God's Answer to Critical Race Theory

Luke 13:1-5

Prayer: *Father, we just again thank you for gathering us together as you have, as you do each week. We just continue to pray for grace and strength and insight and wisdom particularly this week, this is kind of an incendiary topic that we're going to be looking at. And so I pray for your Holy Spirit's presence, I pray for insight, grace and wisdom as we pray each week, Lord, that you would accompany us, that you would give us the privilege of your presence and that this would be of lasting value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

I want to start out by looking at a passage in the gospel of Luke that people have kind of wondered about for centuries. Jesus seems to have this very strange response to the news of the day that's reported to him by some folks that were in the crowd that were surrounding him. This is Luke 13. It says: *There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than*

all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Jesus appears to almost dismiss these two different kinds of tragedies that were obviously very big news at the time, I mean one was an apparent workplace accident, the other was an attack on a religious community by government agents. These two different incidents had stirred up the people and they were anxious to hear, Jesus, what's your take on this? I would love to be able to hear Jesus's take on some of the news of our day because there's no shortage of things that stir people up. I mean there's big news in our culture all the time. And because our communication now is instantaneous, incidents that may have taken months to describe and communicate, they now become part of our news feed within minutes.

And now the news of this week which you all well now is that of the trial of a police officer accused of murdering a black man that he was taking into custody. Many people said it was emblematic of the systemic racism that defines America while others said that cold hard statistics just don't back up those claims. Racism has galvanized the news for almost a year and it has divided our

country. It's not only divided the country but it's literally resulted in the deaths of dozens and dozens of people killed by rioting while destroying hundreds of millions of dollars worth of property, and it's also divided the church. There's many Christians who arrive at very different answers to how we as believers should address this. And so I want to take some time this morning to look at this hopefully from a biblical perspective to arrive at some conclusions that I believe are God honoring.

And there's some terms that have been thrown around repeatedly that I think people have very little understanding of that I would at least like to attempt to illuminate. Terms like "critical race theory" and "white supremacy" and "intersectionality," these terms get thrown around like everybody knows what they mean, that they know what they stand for. I know I certainly didn't understand them when I first came upon them and I suspect you didn't as well. And so I want to address this morning how God would have us understand what the issue of critical race theory is and what a biblical response to it is as well, but in order to do that we first have to address the issue of race honestly and openly.

Let me start off by saying that I believe that this is a blessed country. Anyone who says that this is nationalistic posturing needs to understand that if you are the wealthiest and most

powerful nation in the history of mankind which the United States certainly is, that it has to be because in some way God has blessed it. Well, the differences between my view and the view of Christian nationalism which I do reject is that I am a citizen first and foremost of the kingdom of God and secondly, politically of the United States of America. I mean my loyalty first and foremost is to the kingdom and secondarily it's to the United States. That having been said, I believe that God has uniquely blessed us as a nation in the same way that he blesses any people group. He made it very clear why he blesses this way when he blessed Abraham by saying in *Genesis 12:1*: *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* I mean there's one reason why God has blessed the United States so abundantly, and that is so that we could in turn abundantly bless the rest of the world, not just with money, not just with power but with the gospel itself and all the good that that brings. God is very clear about those who are blessed and their responsibility and this is how he puts it in *Luke 12*. He says: *"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."*

So first and foremost I believe that we are a great nation, a nation blessed by God not because we're any different or any better than anybody else on the face of the earth but because we've been privileged to be a blessing to the rest of the world. It is a privilege that we have not handled well. Instead of honoring God as the source of our blessing, we have moved inward, rejecting the God who has blessed us and as I've said many, many times, because we've chosen to suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness, he has chosen to leave us to wallow in our own sin and folly as the sins of our past now become the great conflict of our present. See, we're also a nation with a great sin in its past and that sin was the sin of slavery.

The primary source of slavery in the United States was the African continent and that source was frequently supplied by the kidnapping of people wrenched from their families and brought here on ships in such appalling conditions that over a third of them died in transit. Then they were sold into slavery as property not just for the rest of their lives but for the rest of their children's lives as well. There's no denying that that slavery was a driving force behind much of the growth of this country at the start and there's no denying that it was profoundly wicked in God's eyes. I mean understand, this type of kidnapping and enslavement was something that was absolutely forbidden by God. In scripture it was a crime

punishable by death. *Exodus 21* says: "*Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.*" People say, well, the Bible condones slavery. It's a sad fact that many Protestant denominations and ministers quoted scripture to justify slavery claiming that this was simply a biblical fact, but that denies some of the clear statements that scripture makes concerning the whole nature of servitude.

"Slavery" -- quote, unquote -- in Israel was much more akin to indentured servitude than it was to slavery. And indentured servitude was something practiced by many, it was practiced by many who came here on ships. They would indenture themselves for a period of time to someone in order to pay for their passage. It was also frequently used by someone who would indenture himself to a trade person in order to learn the trade. And it was far different than the actual practice of chattel slavery where a human being was literally considered property to be bought and sold and owned by another person. We know servanthood in Israel is not anything remotely like the life-long ownership of a person as practiced in this country because by law an Israelite was required to be released in his seventh year. Not only was he required to be released, but he was required to be cared for at the time of his release. *Deuteronomy 15* says: "*If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you*

let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today."

Folks say well, you know, maybe that's true for Hebrew slaves but the Israelites treated foreign slaves altogether differently, and if they did, they did so in violation of God's law. Consider Job's statement about the treatment of his servants and his being called to account by God for that treatment. Just to give you the context, Job in his misery is trying to figure out why he's being treated so badly and one of the things he considers is that, well, maybe God's punishing him for mistreating his servants. Well if so, Job reasons that God's being unfair because he's guiltless when it comes to that. Job would not have even brought up such a thing if it hadn't been written into his consciousness by God that his servants were persons deserving of dignity. Listen to what Job says in *Job 31*. He says: *"If I have denied justice to any of my servants, whether male or female, when they had a grievance against me, what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?"* Clearly the

slavery that was practiced for almost 300 years in the United States is vastly different than the -- quote -- "slavery" -- unquote -- as practiced in Israel. Our practice of slavery was not only fixed geographically in the south, it was also fixed generationally in legacy issues that continue even until this day. And by "legacy issues" I mean that generations of people who were brought here as slaves were denied something that generations of virtually everyone else who's ever come here had, and that is parents, grandparents and great grandparents who were able to work and then pass on something of value to their generation. I mean my parents came over here from Ireland and Sweden and by hard work they were able to establish themselves as families capable of passing on from one generation to another generation the value that they had accumulated during their lifetimes. And whatever hard work, whatever value the slaves had accumulated, it never went to their offspring, it always went to their owners, and thus generation after generation were denied the legacy that we who were never enslaved had received from our parents, our grandparents and great grandparents. And all of that is contained in this whole understanding of systemic racism that we hear repeated night after night. But understand, it is an issue that demands a sober examination. We as a country have sinned a great sin and the big issue facing us now is how do we respond to that sin?

Well, over the last forty or fifty years this country, I believe, has taken great strides to attempt to address those iniquities through the Civil Rights Act, through affirmative action, through countless other programs and yet still questions remain. Well this morning we're going to examine what the world has put forth as its response and it goes by the title "Critical Race Theory." And so we're going to ask is this a biblical response? Is this God pleasing? Is this something that we should be investing in? And one resource has been very helpful for me is a free E-book entitled "*Engaging Critical Theory and the Social Justice Movement*" by Dr. Neil Shenvi. And Dr. Shenvi is a committed evangelical who has soberly and critically examined critical race theory which is also known as "CRT" to those devoted to it, and this is what he concluded -- quote: "Contemporary critical theory and Christianity conflict not merely with respect to a few minor details, but with respect to basic questions of epistemology" -- that's knowledge, that's how you know what you know -- "epistemology, identity, morality, and authority. To the extent that we accept and embrace fully the core principles of contemporary critical theory, we will have to abandon Christianity and vice versa."

Well this morning I want to look at why he arrived at that conclusion. And we'll start off by looking at two phrases that you hear shouted out over and over again from the rooftops by the

press. The first one is "black lives matter" and the other one is "critical race theory." Let me just state something right from the beginning something that should be incredibly obvious and that's black lives do indeed matter because all lives matter. Now the reason why that's considered highly insulting to some is because they feel that black lives are the ones that deserve special attention because they had been singled out for oppression for centuries now. As one person put it, if you saw a house that was on fire and responded to that house fire by shrugging your shoulders and saying, "Well, that house matters because all houses matter," well you're ignoring the house that's on fire. A Christian response to black lives matter is that all lives matter, and all lives matter because God matters most and he is the one who has imbued into every single human being a supreme dignity from the womb to the tomb. And the bottom line is that race continues to be an issue in this country and to deny that it is, I believe, is not Christ honoring. So having said that, I firmly believe that the organization -- quote -- "Black Lives Matter" is antithetical to the Christian gospel and is an enemy to racial harmony and progress. It is a Marxist, atheistic, sexually aberrant organization that thus far has caused great harm to America, and it's capable of even greater harm. And that having been said, I want to address their primary philosophical underpinning which they call "critical race theory."

Basically critical race theory or CRT divides the entire world into two groups. There are those who are oppressors and there are those who are the oppressed. Oppression occurs, according to CRT, not necessarily along the lines of overt out-and-out oppression but rather from what is called "hegemonic power norms." That's clearly a fifty-cent phrase. The discussion of critical race theory is full of fifty-cent phrases. And when you say the word "hegemonic" which you'll see a lot of those discussions, just take that word out and substitute the word "dominant." And what the claim is is that whatever group is dominant in a culture, it is that group that makes up the rules for everybody else. There's no such thing as absolute right and wrong according to CRT, just simply who has the power and who doesn't. Who's the oppressed and who's the oppressor. And to put it simply, CRT refers to any established idea as to what is normal, what is expected, what is valuable, those ideas are considered oppressive. Add to it the fact that those prevailing ideas in our culture as to what is normal, expected and valuable will come from a culture where whites yielded the most power and you have what they consider to be white supremacist hegemonic power norms that define all the rules. So if you were born white, you are automatically a member of an oppressive class, period. If you're a member of an oppressed group, your legitimacy depends on the level of your oppression. For instance a woman is more oppressed than a man according to this

view because men have always been viewed as having more power, but a white woman is less oppressed than a black woman since a black woman has two levels of oppression: being female and being black. And this is where the phrase "intersectionality" comes from. You see, everyone in the oppressed class is rated by different levels of oppression and each level represents a different intersection of oppression. For example, a black homosexual woman represents not one, not two, but three different intersections of oppression: that would be her race, her gender, and her sexuality. And because of those three different levels of oppression, her voice is therefore that much more worthy to be heard. And so you can guess this gets very complicated and it all has to do with who gets to make the rules. And those rules, the prevailing cultural rules of today, they're all subject to change. And so you look at the traditional rules, the rules that say, okay, well, little girls play with dolls and little boys play with trucks and with cars, they grow up to go to school, they get jobs, they get married and have typical nuclear families of mom, dad, and kids. Well, those rules, according to critical race theory, are typical and normal only because white folks had the power first and so they were there to make up the rules. In other words critical race theory sees God, mom and apple pie not just the normal way that Americans relate to life but as an oppressive system established by white people that also punishes any deviations from those norms by seeing

them as abnormal, unusual, deviant or worthless. Furthermore, it recognized that oppressors might be completely unaware that they are oppressing anyone. Because according to critical race theory, power itself corrupts your perception of reality, and that makes it impossible or at least highly unlikely for those at the top to see how oppressive they've been. They're simply living their lives in their normal oppressive ways. And it is the norms themselves that are considered to be oppressive, especially if what's normal to you is God, mom and apple pie. I mean if what is normal to you is not God, mom and apple pie but atheism, a non nuclear family and some other kind of pie, well, then you're going to see life as completely different. And when you finally realize on our side that what you thought was completely normal is in fact in their view oppressive, well then you have three different responses that you can make. One is to say, okay, get lost. The other one is just shrug your shoulders, and the third one is yet a new term which we now refer to as "woke". And that simply means that you have now awakened to the fact that your idea of normal is in fact classic oppression.

You probably noticed that there's many public figures and the like who acknowledge their knew status as being awakened to this new oppressive way of thinking. And that idea being awoken is where the term "woke" actually comes from. In fact the Oxford Dictionary

expanded its definition of the word "woke" in 2017 to add it as an adjective meaning -- quote -- "alert to injustice in society, especially racism." Now this sounds incredibly complicated but I think I can reduce it to its simplest level by saying, okay, let's bring this down to the sandbox. And there's different groups of kids in the sandbox, and one group of kids is saying, "You're not the boss of us and you don't get to make up the rules as to how we play in this sandbox just because you got here first!" That's the power structure that's there right now. They say just because you were able to make up the rules doesn't make our rules any less legitimate than yours. Well that's a vastly simplified nutshell assessment of critical race theory. And there are at least three different ways in which we can actually agree with their premise. I mean first we can recognize that oppression is wrong, I mean, in fact as believers we consider oppression to be sinful. Jesus himself opened up his public ministry with these words from Isaiah. He said: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed."*

Secondly, we also recognize that power itself can be self-deceptive. Dr. Shenvi says: "It does not take an extensive study of history or psychology to recognize that human beings have

a propensity for self deception. Given the right incentives, we twist reality to suit our desires and power is a strong incentive. Theologically the doctrine of human depravity provides an explanation of this phenomenon and shows how Christians can have tremendous blind spots when it comes to areas in which we have a vested interest. Christians should approach subjects like racism, sexism and classism with humility recognizing that our salvation in Christ does not make us sinless or infallible interpreters of scripture or reality."

And thirdly, again as Christians we recognize that norms are oftentimes established not by what's right but simply by who's got the power. I mean as Christians we have watched in horror as Hollywood and television and the press, they've crafted brand new norms over the last thirty years that are absolutely antithetical to Bible-believing Christians. And because they now have the power and control over the media, they've been able to establish their norms as the new -- quote -- "hegemonic power norms." And so right before our eyes we see them redefining our biblical norms as abnormal, unusual, deviant and worthless. So we know that norms themselves are no proof of virtue or truth. So having described critical race theory we now need to understand why it is wrong, why it is doomed to failure and why it is profoundly unbiblical.

First it's wrong because CRT's understanding of what is right is based not on norms or standards but rather on whether or not that standard has been liberated from an oppressor group. And you can probably guess, CRT is hopelessly subjective in terms of declaring what is right or wrong but it only sees these things in terms of oppressed and oppressive. I mean it takes a great deal of sorting out to see who has the right to say to the rest of the sandbox, "I get to make the rules because I am the most oppressed." But you know, even that status changes any time the oppressed gets power because if they get power, they become blind to it because power itself is blinding in and of itself. And so you can see this form of thinking creates this endless cycle of constantly moving parts of different groups and subgroups as they gain and lose power. I mean, it is classic Marxist power struggles and there's no possible way of ending it because there's no standard that's over and above any of the people that are involved in the struggle. And secondly it's doomed to failure because the very people who were able to succeed in this system, by their very success they gain power and it's that power that's going to change them from oppressed to oppressors. And finally, it's inherently unbiblical because of the profound differences between CRT and scripture in that scripture is not rooted in human beings at all but rather in a transcendent God who is all powerful and all good and who makes the rules based on his infinite knowledge and goodness. We don't have to engage in

sandbox arguments as to who's boss over whom and who gets to make the rules because there's a sovereign boss over every human being who's ever walked the face of this earth. And guess what? He gets to establish the rules. And rules don't change according to who's oppressed and who's the oppressor. I mean whatever is right and true and noble and just two thousand or ten thousand years ago is still right and noble and true and just today and forever. And so rather than conforming to the subjective idea of who has the power ourselves, we instead conform to the objective standards that are given to us by an all-powerful God. When it comes to the idea of being blinded by power, we Christians can agree that we're all hopelessly blinded not just because of power but because of sin itself. But in scripture we have an objective answer to our blindness, it's a standard set by God who's completely outside of human systems and is therefore not subject to them. Instead of fighting over who has the power, we have the model of God himself as the ultimate servant who emptied himself of his vast power to take on the role of a servant, who then lived a perfect life and offered his life up as a sacrifice so that we by faith in his sacrifice could have his righteousness and stand before God with his righteousness instead of our sin.

So where does this leave us as believers trying to understand and respond to the racial issues that are wracking our country? How do

we react and respond? Well, I think we go back to basics. I mean first of all we have to understand that the whole idea of race itself is an absolutely artificial construct. The fact is there's only one race. There's only one race, the human race, and it was established by two people, a male named Adam and a female named Eve. Every single person on the face of this planet, every single person who has ever lived can trace their lineage back to those two people. To be sure there's different people groups, scripture calls them "ethnos" or "nations" but they're never based on immutable or unchangeable characteristics such as skin color and gene pools but rather on cultural choices reflective of each groups. I mean the difference between Canaanites and the Israelites was not based on their genetic profiles or their race, which is an immutable characteristic that you're simply born with and you have no choice in, rather they were based on the cultural choices made, established and passed down by their rulers. God says in *1 Samuel*: *"For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."* The proof of that, biblically speaking, is the fact that there are not one but two Canaanites who are directly in the line of Jesus: That's Rahab and Ruth. See, man looks specifically at the outward appearance and he now tries to govern on the basis of that appearance. Man's solution to racism and discrimination appears to be simply to add new levels of reverse racism and discrimination in

order to balance the scales. In fact the state of California is now looking to reverse its discrimination laws specifically so that it now can discriminate against white people in order to make things right. And all it's going to do is stir up more racial tension. You see the world is going to continue to flail around wildly seeking a solution, because they've completely and utterly rejected God, they're not going to find one. The answer is to be found as it's always found is in the pages of scripture. In fact the apostle Paul had the solution. We read about it a few weeks ago in the book of Philippians. *Philippians 3:13* says: *But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* The gospel of the critical race theory espoused, it does just the opposite. Instead of forgetting what lies behind, it's a gospel of resentment that looks backward for grievances and forward for reparation. It's just another version of the endless Marxist view of the struggle for power. And the model that we need to aim towards is the model that God laid out for the church itself in *Colossians 3*. This is what God said. He said: *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint*

against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Now it's been pointed out these are incredibly disparate groups: Scythian and barbarian, Greek and Jew, slave and free, circumcised and uncircumcised, if these groups had decided not to press forward but to look backwards, they would have been able to find, each one of them, a whole host of grievances, one against each other. That would have made the whole idea of the church utterly impossible, but they didn't. They knew the solution to racial inequity for those who were oppressed is forgiveness. *Ephesians 4:32: Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* They also knew the solution to racial inequality for those who had been the oppressors, whether knowingly or unknowingly, was to include a willingness to hear difficult things with oppressors willing to enter into our oppressed brothers' experience and not our own. James says: *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

See, the world has run out of solutions to the problem of racism and it's flailing about seeking to find one when God has given us the answer in scripture. And just as critical race theory divides

the world into only two groups: the oppressor and the oppressed, so too does the Bible divide the entire world into two people groups, neither of which is determined by genetics. You see the Bible makes it very clear that there are but two groups that inhabit this entire planet and they're both made up of every different kind of racial grouping you can think of because their differences have nothing to do with race. One pastor brilliantly pointed out that the differences are so stark between these groups that God forbids marriage between these two, and it has nothing to do with immutable characteristics such as skin color. It has everything to do with what kingdom they belong to. God expressly forbids marriage between believers in the kingdom of God and those who believe in the kingdom of this world. That is the only "interracial" -- quote, unquote -- marriage that the Bible expressly forbids. It's stated right here in *2 Corinthians: Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?* So God does in fact insist on separation of these two people groups. And he's very clear in saying that red and yellow, black and white, believers are to be separate from red and yellow, black and white unbelievers because each represents two completely different worlds. And once again we find the answer to racism is not CRT, it's scripture, and

it really is simply a matter of putting first things first.

And finally, I want to circle back, if I can use a Jen Psaki term, I want to circle back to the scripture that I opened with. It's that strange encounter that Jesus had with the news flash of the day because Jesus points out what I think the answer to the question of racism needs to be for us believers today. Let me just bring you back to *Luke 13*. It says: *There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."* The strange sentiment, these people desperately want Jesus's opinion, particularly since one of these incidents involved not just human cruelty, the other one also involved the cruelty of fate itself. I mean in one instance you have Pilate's wickedness resulting in the death of some observant Jews; in another instance you have a workplace accident that takes the lives of a group of people, and Jesus' answer to both of them looks like a gigantic non sequitur. Verse 3: *"I tell you; but unless you*

repent, you will all likewise perish." What does that have to do with what the question was? Well, what Jesus was doing we call cutting to the chase. You see, when challenged with arguments that may seem pressing or important or even crucial, Jesus went to the central issue that made that argument seem immaterial at best. The issue was repentance. And in essence what Jesus was saying is that both parties, those who died at the hands of Pilate and those who died because of a twist of fate, in the end they both wound up having to face a far more important question than those of us are going to have to face and it's not about fairness, it's not about equity, it's not about choosing the hands of fate or in wicked leaders. Those issues, as important as they may be, fade into insignificance when addressing the issue of whether or not you have fully repented of your sin and become part of the kingdom of God, and that's really what Jesus and his church is all about. You see, it's very easy for the church to get caught up in all kinds of arguments that seem to have merit, I mean, after all those questions that were raised to Jesus, they seem worthy of at least discussion; but Jesus wasn't having it. Instead he wanted to go to the heart of the matter suggesting that the only question that really matters is will you be ready when your moment of judgment comes. I'm not suggesting that questions of race relation are of no importance, because they are, I mean absolutely, but you have to understand that what the church really needs to be passionate about

is that question of repentance. See, the enemy is very good at distracting us with what is called the "shiny object syndrome." That's where you take a bright shiny object and you use it to distract and you dangle it in front of folks so that they think it's of primary importance while you're slipping something far more dangerous right in front of their eyes. I get the sense that that's exactly what Jesus was addressing. The shiny object question was: Why do these bad things happen? I mean to be sure, it's an important issue just as critical race theory and race relations in general are important issues. But the real issue according to Jesus was far more critical and getting totally lost in the confusion. Workplace accidents and wicked leaders matter a lot but compared to the biggest issue of all, the issue that we seem to care about less and less, it almost seems like a distraction. Just look at the question and Jesus's answer. This is verse 4: *"Those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?"* Jesus' answer is direct and to the point. He says, "Nope." *"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

Is racism an important issue worthy of a thoughtful and careful response? Absolutely. Is it the most important issue that we Christians have to wrestle with? Nope. Is it a symptom of our

corporate sickness and rebellion? Yup. Is there an answer to that sickness? Yup. It's very same answer that Jesus gave, it's the same answer that scripture gives about turning from wickedness to the kingdom. *2 Chronicles 7:14: If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Let's pray.*

Father, we just thank you for your word, we thank you that while this culture is collapsing in front of us in so many different ways, racism being one of it, the way that they're trying to address it and the way that they have literally pushed you out and said we'll do this on our own, and Lord, you sit in heaven and laugh derisively, looking down at what we do when we think we are wise. Oh, Father, give us the ability to go back to scripture, to go back to the principles that guide scripture and to understand as we're back there what matters most. What matters most is that most of these folks are going to a Godless eternity, that's what matters most. I pray for the grace and the strength and the insight and the wisdom to understand that and to put that into effect, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.