

## Sharing Christ in a brWOKEn World

### Sermon 4 – Breaking the Chains of Woke Racism

Like every other country in the world, like every other people group or population, Canada has had its problems with discrimination, bigotry and racism. Although we have fared better than most, mostly because of our Christian heritage, we have not been immune to these social problems and injustices. Historically, Canada as a nation, has at times fallen far short of what the Bible would call godly and righteous.

**The Indigenous people have lived with laws that clearly treat them differently that the rest of Canada,** and even if these laws were well intended at times, and some were, the Canadian Indian Act established in 1876, has been a source of discrimination and racism since its origin. The issues are complex, and it's too easy to say, "just fix the law," there are problems at the Federal level, but there are also problems at the Band and Council level of First Nations Communities, but that said, it would be hard to find a group of people in Canada who have suffered more over a longer period of time than our First Nations and Indigenous people at the hands of unfair laws that don't work.

**I could talk about Chinese immigrants to Canada** during the 1800's, who were wanted to help work on the railroads but treated with discrimination in many areas of life, including an Immigration Head Tax intended to keep Asian people from migrating to Canada, and the terrible law that prevented Asian Canadians from voting in federal elections up until 1948.

**And when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and Canada declared war on them,** 90 per cent of the Japanese Canadian population, roughly 21,000 men, women, and children, were sent to crowded Internment Camps. They were relocated far from their homes and sent to do hard labour, roadwork, and sugar beet planting. Their belongings were seized and sold by the federal government to fund the cost of their internment. After the end of the Second World War, Japanese Canadians were prohibited from returning to British Columbia, where most of them lived prior to the war. Approximately 4,000 Japanese Canadians were deported to Japan. 66 per

cent of those deported were Canadian citizens by birth or naturalization. Many of them had never been to Japan. It took four more years after the war, before Japanese Canadians were allowed to move freely again across Canada. Although most Canadians hardly think about it or know about it, it would be hard to find a more blatant example of a specific, explicit systemic racist event in our history.

**Today, we have discriminatory rules for immigrants** asking for things like “Canadian Work Experience,” and thus denying people with skills the opportunity to work in their field, and we base a great deal of our economy on migrant workers who are brought to Canada and not paid a living wage to do the work that you and I will not do. There are still many problems today.

In the last few weeks, both Anne and I have had conversations with people who are still facing bigotry and hatred based on the colour of their skin.

I’m a Scarborough boy, born and raised, I grew up in the centre of multiculturalism, my churches have always been multicultural, my communities, and my family, Anne from Guyana, my daughter-in-law a Russian from Kazakhstan, and my soon to be daughter-in-law from China.

So, forgive me if I shake my head and wonder how people could be so foolish and cruel today, but here we are, not as bad as before, not nearly as bad as before, but still dealing with discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or skin colour and other things.

### **THE PROBLEM – WOKE CULTURE, DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM**

So, the question for our sermon today is, “What do we, the Church, have to say to a broken, woke culture trying to deal with racial discrimination.”

Today, I believe we have much to say and much to offer, but first let’s examine the currents of **racism and racial talk** in our culture and try to understand the impact of **woke culture** on these matters, because I think this area is particularly susceptible to woke ideology and thus can be challenging for the Christian to understand and offer a Christian witness.

So, I will begin with a few stories today to introduce you to the world of racism as it appears in Woke Culture, and like I said about Victimhood Culture, there is still real prejudice, but sadly, it is often overshadowed by a kind of fabricated racism.

Let's begin by considering what most today would call a WOKE approach to racism and discrimination. It is typically called either Critical Race Theory, or Anti-racism or Diversity Training. And to do this there is probably no better example than Ibram X Kendi.

### **IBRAM X KENDI - Born Ibram Henry Rogers**

Kendi was born in Queens, NY to middle-class parents, Carol Rogers, a business analyst for a health-care organization, and Larry Rogers, a tax accountant and then hospital chaplain. Both of his parents are now retired and work as Methodist ministers. Kendi was brought up in a Christian home, he seems to have completely rejected Christianity today.

He has Ph.D. in African American Studies. In July 2020, he founded the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University where he serves as director.

Kendi was included in Time's 100 Most Influential People of 2020.

In the last 10 years he has two of the best-selling books in North America: "Stamped from the Beginning", which I have not read, and "How to be an Antiracist," which I have read.

In his book, "**How to be an Antiracist**," Kendi makes the following assertions:

1. **You can't be nonracist, you are either racist or antiracist**, which to him means that you are either acting racist or explicitly fighting against racism. This is the "ally" idea of Victimhood Culture, for Kendi there is no neutral ground. You can't just be kind and loving to everyone, you have to identify racism, call it out, and fight against it – every day. Otherwise, you are a racist. He says that if you say you are not a racist, that proves you are a racist.
2. **Kendi also states that "racist" and "antiracist" are like peelable name tags that are placed and replaced based on what someone is doing or not doing, supporting or expressing in each moment.** These are not permanent tattoos. No one is a racist or

antiracist. We can only strive to be one or the other in each moment. He says you must prove yourself every day, it's like me having an alter call every week to save you from hell in case you told a lie this week.

3. **All policies are either racist or antiracist.** ... All ideas are either racist or antiracist. That way, we had a crazy conversation a few years ago in Ontario that said, "Math was racist". For Kendi everything is about race. No matter what you are talking about or make policy for, it can always be framed in the idea of race.
4. **He also says that only racist discrimination is bad, but antiracist discrimination is good.** So, for example, a new thing in Universities is rooms and spaces where only Black people can go, White people are not allowed. Last year the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, a publicly funded arts centre actually tried this by booking an event that only Black people could go to. There was so much backlash that they eventually opened it up to everyone.

Kendi would say, "This is great, it balances the scale for most people of all ethnic backgrounds", however, this feels like revenge or shaming for something that happened a long time ago and offers no positive solutions.

**After reading his book, it seems to me that Kendi is a product of his time.** A man who has become famous, wealthy and prestigious by teaching the world that **he is a victim.** He charges \$20,000.00 to teach this stuff, and with his book sales, his teaching and his speaking engagements, he has amassed a person net worth of over 200 million dollars! Apparently, anti-racism is a very big business. It would seem the racist world he lives in has been very good to him indeed!

And if you remember my first sermon where I showed you the Government of Canada anti-racism training curriculum, much of it comes from his work and others of like mind.

## **SAMUEL SEY**

Samuel Sey is a Ghanaian-Canadian who currently lives in Ohio. He is a blogger and social commentator. On his website he describes himself as conservative and an evangelical Christian.

**Sey was asked to speak about racism at Ambrose University in Alberta** (it's a Christian University). After he spoke the Student Council put out an apology and said he should not have been invited because his speech "caused severe harm" to some students.

What did he say that caused harm to a group of Christian University Students? Well, he opened his speech with this question:

**"If I asked you, what's the best antiracist book today, what would you say?"**

**"If we say anything other than the Bible we're completely and destructively wrong."**

He went on to say that he did not think that Canada was systemically racist, as systemic racism needs "a policy or law within a system — especially our political system — that shows partiality for one group of people over another group of people. Absent that, there cannot be systemic racism."

**"No one here today can identify a single racist law."**

I'm sure you can imagine, but Samuel Sey does not have a net worth of 200 million. His voice is counterculture and Christian, and as a great philosopher once said, "No one ever made their fortune telling the truth".

## **EGERTON RYERSON**

Let's look at another example in our Canadian culture. For this one I want to talk about a man who died 200 years ago but has recently been all over the news in Toronto. Egerton Ryerson. In August of 2021, Ryerson University announced that it would be changing its name. By then the statue of Egerton Ryerson had already been toppled and its head thrown into the Don River. It would be renamed Toronto Metropolitan University.

In 2018 the president of Ryerson placed a plaque next to the statue that stated, "Egerton Ryerson was instrumental in the design and implementation of the Indian Residential School System". Only, he wasn't. Ryerson was dead 12 years before the government of Canada opened the First Residential School, and they didn't use his recommendations, they used the recommendations of another man named Nicholas Flood

Davin. **Even the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not find him at fault for the Residential School System.**

So how could a university, and a mob, succeed in destroying a man's reputation when none of their claims can be backed up historically.

Welcome to Woke mob rule.

What really happened was this. In 1847 Ryerson was the education superintendent for Upper Canada, now Ontario. He was asked to write a report on how to educate Indian children. So he did, he wrote a report but this was 40 years before the opening of Residential Schools. 40 years later John A. Macdonald would commission another report from a man named Davin and use it to design the Residential School System. There is not historical connection between Ryerson's report and the actual implementation of the Residential School System.

So what did Ryerson recommend that got him in so much trouble? He did recommend Residential Schools, and he recommended that they have pastor and religious oversight (which all schools did in his day), but after that, not much of what he specifically recommended was used.

In 1846, at Orillia, a meeting with 30 Indian Chiefs was held to consider the educational needs of Indigenous youth. (In my sermon I said Ryerson was at these meetings, but he was not – it was attended by a group of Methodist Missionaries but Ryerson was not able to attend, although much of his report seems to reflect the spirit of this meeting.) The meeting agreed on the desirability of establishing Residential Schools focused on teaching agricultural skills. The schools would enable Indians to achieve some degree of economic self-sufficiency. An outline of school objectives and the curriculum was agreed upon. The Chiefs offered to contribute a portion of their Treaty Allowances to assist with the costs of school operation. Two schools were established. The schools were unsuccessful because the Chiefs felt the government of Canada was not working in good faith and didn't fund them properly. This was all done years before Residential Schools were established by John A. Macdonald.

It's also very important and often overlooked that Ryerson was Methodist. The Methodists did attempt schools for Indian children, but they were all voluntary day schools on the reserves, not residential school eventually run by some Catholic and Anglican church on behalf of the Government.

Ryerson's recommendations were different from what was eventually established.

What Ryerson supported was:

- Voluntary attendance with parental permission.
- Students being allowed to learn in both English and their native language.
- Curriculum focused on agricultural education and possibly mechanics.
- Government supervision with pastoral (missionary) oversight but the teachers were to be knowledgeable in their fields so farmers and mechanics if possible.
- The schools would be established in conjunction with Indigenous leaders.
- The overarching purpose was Indigenous self-sufficiently.

And here is what no one talked about as they tore down his statue:

- Ryerson began working as a missionary to the Ojibwe people in Ontario in 1826. (In my sermon I said Ryerson came to Canada in 1826, but he was born here, this is when he started his missionary work).
- He lived with them and learned their language.
- He was a farmer and so he taught them new techniques for farming which improved their lives.
- He fought the government to protect their rights to their own land and their rights to their fishing grounds, both of which were being taken away by the government of Upper Canada.
- He promoted the careers of Ojibwe people and learned to step back and allow Christian Ojibwe men to preach and teach to their own people in their own language.
- He was so loved by the Ojibwe that the Chief made him a brother and gave him the name **Cheehock**, which means *bird on a wing*.

There is nothing in the history of Canada that suggests he caused harm to the First Nations peoples but today, he is forever maligned and considered a contributor to cultural genocide - this is what Ibram Kendi's ideas look like in real life. This is Woke Culture's answer to racism. One author calls this Woke Racism.

## **THE EARLY CHURCH**

What if I told you that the Early Church, the First Church, the Church founded by the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts was in fact expert at the topic of discrimination. That the New Testament is filled with examples of the Early Church struggling with discrimination and equality. It's true, let me show you the Biblical record.

1. The first official complaint to the disciples from the congregation was about discrimination and favouritism. Acts 6:1-4
2. The first official complaint that Peter received as leader of the church was that he ate at the house of a non-Jew. Acts 11:1-3
3. The first official argument in the church was because some leaders wanted the gentile believers to adapt Jewish customs and culture. Acts 15
4. The first official council called by the disciples was to figure out what to do with foreigners in the church. Acts 15
5. The only recorded conversation between Peter and Paul was an argument about Peter being racist towards the gentiles and not associating with them when Jewish leaders showed up. Gal. 2

This is truly amazing, and a little frightening. The sinful heart of humanity seems very susceptible to discrimination and racism – even amongst the people who have chosen to follow Christ.

But for us today, this is good news. Not that the Early Church struggled with these issues but rather that because they did, the apostles wrote about such issues and used the scriptures to



teach us a better way. And if the Bible teaches us a better way, then we can live out that way and offer it as a witness to this broken world.

#### **Consider James 2:1-4**

*1 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

#### **James 2:8-9**

*8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.*

Here we learn that the church cannot treat any one any different than anyone else, no matter who that person is. **No respecter of persons, no favoritism, no discrimination. Period.**

#### **Now look at what Paul teaches in Eph. 2:14-20**

*14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in His flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

*19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone.*

I hate to break it to Kendi and the others, but the Church is called to be color blind as it was, we are not to put our earthly culture first but rather our identity in Christ. **As I spoke about a few weeks ago from 1 Peter 2 He has made us into His people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.**

The Bible is clear. God does not respect my Canadian citizenship, He does not care if I come from British heritage, He has taken all that and put it into the service of His culture, His nation, His kingdom.

### **Consider Galatians chapter 3**

*26 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. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

### **AND MY FAVOURITE – 2 Corinthians 5:17**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

### **And about these old things passing away Paul said in Philippians chapter 3:**

*13 But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

Oh Church, we have an abundance of teaching, and abundance of scriptures that gives us clear guidance as to how we should treat each other, consider each other, and live without prejudice and discrimination. And all we have to do, to break the chains in this world is **LIVE IT.**

### **THE CHURCH AS OUR WITNESS**

Now usually I would at this point show you how you can leave this place and go into the world and witness for Christ, but in this situation, this place is the witness. The church, the gathering, what we do together and how we do it is the best witness we have to show the world, a better way than the racist, antiracist, people blaming problems that fill their lives.

## **THE ANSWER IS YOU, CHURCH!**

- **No discrimination.**
- **Talk and live unity over equality. Equality is good, Unity is better. Can the eye say to the hand, "I don't need you." 1 Cor. 12**
- **Speak first of Christ then our earthly nationality.**
- **Know the past, don't live in the past - press on to the future.**

**Reverse the Curse:** In Genesis chapter 11 God punishes the arrogance of mankind by dividing their tongues so that they cannot attempt to stand against Him as one united group. Our ethnicities, our cultures, all the things that people focus on to divide us with discrimination and hatred they all come from a fallen world. It's all a part of the curse.

In Acts when the Holy Spirit came and formed the Church out of a group of rag-tag followers of Jesus Christ the first miracle that was preformed was the miracle of tongues. They began speaking about God and everyone heard them in their own language.

Church, the first witness we gave to the world was Unity, the first gift we gave to the world was an end to the barriers that keep us apart.

When it comes to discrimination, and racism, we have a gift to give to the world. So, the next time you are in a conversation about such things, don't talk like the world, talk like the Book.

And if someone doesn't believe you when you tell that the world can be all these things, tell them,

"Come with me next Sunday to a place called HPBC and I'll show you what a world without racism looks like. Come to church with me and see what a peculiar people look like, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." And perhaps they will take you up on your offer, and perhaps you will bring one more person out of darkness and into God's glorious light.

And the people said, "Amen".