

THE NEW NORMAL #5
“I Can’t Breathe”

We are living in turbulent times facing many issues that need to be resolved. Many people are saying that our country is in the midst of a cultural revolution. We are going through a period of change and what it will look like down the road, nobody knows. The new normal is a mystery. With the tragic death of George Floyd three words have become commonplace: “I can’t Breathe.” There is a cry for justice that has led to global protesting about his death by bad cops. Racial tensions, that have always been there, have escalated because of this tragic event, but what can be done about the ugly sin of racism? Today’s message will address this issue.

#1. GOD’S PEOPLE SHOULD ADDRESS CURRENT ISSUES THAT OUR COUNTRY IS FACING, Micah 3:7-12

- A. God sent prophets to correct Israel when they went off track
- B. God spoke through prophets about current issues they faced
- C. God identified their sinful ways & called them to repentance
- D. God announced the consequences of their sinfulness
- E. God promised restoration of blessing upon repentance
- F. God expects us to address sin in our society—if we don’t who will?

#2. ALL PEOPLE ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE & LIKENESS OF GOD, Gen 1:26-27

- A. Only mankind bears the divine image—male and female
- B. That sets man apart from the rest of creation
- C. All people are equal in the eyes of God—no partiality
- D. Jesus died for all people and offers them salvation
- E. All people should be treated with dignity and respect

#3. RACISM DISREGARDS THE DIVINE IMAGE IN OTHER PEOPLE, Ja 2:9

- A. Any verbal attack assaults the divine image in others
- B. Racism is one people group thinking they are superior to others
- C. Definition: a belief that **race** is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race
- D. Examples of racism:

#4. RACISM IS DISCRIMINATING AGAINST PEOPLE BASED ON EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS, James 2:1-7

- A. Don’t show favoritism (*prosopolepsia-to receive face*), v. 1
- B. Discriminating & judging is evil, vv. 2-4
- C. Discriminating based on socio-economic status is sinful, vv. 5-7

#5. RACISM VIOLATES THE LOVE COMMAND IN SCRIPTURE, James 2:8-11

- A. Favoritism (racism) disregards people as neighbors, v. 8
- B. Favoritism (racism) makes one a lawbreaker, v. 8
- C. Favoritism (racism) is as serious as violating the Ten Commandments, vv. 9-11

#6. RACISM VIOLATES THE MERCY COMMAND IN SCRIPTURE, James 2:12-13

- A. Believers will be judged by the law, v. 11
- B. Believers must be merciful to avoid God’s judgment, v. 12
- C. Our mercy to others triumphs over God judging us, v. 13
- D. The solution to racism is transforming the heart through the gospel of Jesus Christ!

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Micah 3:7-12: The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God." ⁸But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin. ⁹Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; ¹⁰who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness. ¹¹Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us." ¹²Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

James 3:9: With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.

James 2:1-9: My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³If 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," ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are

they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? ⁸If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- #1. What conclusions can you make about Micah's role as a prophet sent from God? (Micah 3:7-12)
- #2. What role should Christians have in addressing the social injustices that exist in today's America?
- #3. To what degree do you feel pastors should be political?
- #4. What does it mean to made in the image and likeness of God?
- #5. Because all people bear the divine image how should we treat one another?
- #6. Describe the sin of racism?
- #7. Give some examples of racism?
- #8. What is James point in 3:9?
- #9. What does James mean by showing "favoritism"? (2:1)
- #10. How does racism violate the love command: "Love your neighbor as yourself"? (James 2:8-11, Mat 22:36-40)
- #11. How does racism violate the mercy command? (James 2:12-13)
- #12. What is the solution to overcoming racism?