

**Monday**

Read Genesis 11:1-7

The people come together, settle in the same place, and decide to start making bricks. They make bricks so that they could build a giant city and tower so that they would be strong enough to remain united and not be dispersed. They got together to form one, mighty identity that they hoped could not be broken. They would be strong, form a great name for themselves, and so aim for immortality. They are more eager to create a name for themselves than to bear the name of God and glorify God. Their unity has the sinful aim of becoming God-like in and of themselves.

What is God's response? God disperses the people's sinfully-oriented unity and scatters the people over all the earth which gives rise to all the different peoples and languages we witness today. The people came from the various places God led them to forge a homogeneity that was not part of God's plan. God wanted diversity when He sent out the descendants of Noah and this drive for homogeneity in the Babel scene conflicts with God's design. So, he scatters the people back out.

God thinks such diversity is important and to claim that "race does not matter" is an affront to the plans of God. While the intentions of saying "race does not matter" might be good, it isn't part of God's plan. I know for myself that I must continue to learn to appreciate racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity as God's plan instead of a drive to claim we are all the same and I invite you on that journey, too.

**Tuesday**

Read Acts 2:1-41

How hard would it have been for you to become a follower of Jesus Christ if you were forced to learn Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic and could not have the Gospel presented to you in the language you know? God's miracle on Pentecost wasn't to erase the differences of the people but to meet the people where they were at. God the Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit reaches out to you where you are at... regardless of the fact that you do not share the racial, ethnic, cultural, or linguistic characteristics of Peter, the disciples, or the Pentecost crowd. To deny that race,

ethnicity, culture, and language matter in humanity and to God is to deny God's plan for sharing the salvation of His Son with us.

**Wednesday**

Read Revelation 7:9-17

The great multitude who no one could number is in the Kingdom of God having come from every nation, from all tribes and languages, before the throne of Jesus. John can see that they are from every nation and tribe because he can see that they look different from one another. They are all the same. They come together under the banner of the Lord, but they do not lose this part of their identity in doing so. Race continues to matter in the heavenly realms. Race continues in eternity because it is constituent to how God made you and me.

Genesis 1 tells us that we are so unique in Creation that every single human being bears the image of God. Psalm 139 tells us that each and every person is fearfully and wonderfully made. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul illuminates for us that the best way to reflect God's image and live out God's plan for God's people and the world is to be united in our diversity and not to try to paper over our differences and pretend we are all the same – we can be who we are. I urge you to explore these scriptures and your heart as we all prayerfully consider how we need to change so God's love can be fully experienced by all.

**Thursday**

Read Acts 2:14-36 especially for its literary quality and content

The biblical commentator C.H. Dodd notes that all of the missionary sermons in the Book of Acts (we seek the first before us today), all have the same basic outline which could be useful for us as we think about our own witness. The following themes consistently appear: (1) the age of fulfillment has come; (2) it has come through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; (3) the resurrection of the exalted Jesus; (4) the Holy Spirit is the sign of the church's power; (5) the age is fulfilled with Jesus' return; and (6) God calls for repentance and offers forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and the promise of God.

These are the core elements of the apostles' testimony and it can and should be ours! May you be blessed as you dive into this witness!

**Friday** - As we prepare for worship, please read and reflect upon Acts 2:37-41.