

Faith and Racial Equity

Thank you Kasey and good afternoon. It is an honor to join my fellow panelists and our ZOOM audience during this COVID19 moment; to explore the intersection of faith and racial equity.

In our sacred text, chapter 2 of the book of Acts tells us that on the day of Pentecost, there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. The first verse of this text says “when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. We are also informed that as that Pentecostal experience unfolded they were astonished that though they were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya and visitors from Rome both Jews and proselytes; Cretans and Arabs everyone heard the Galileans speaking to them in their own language.

I use that example to say that many houses of worship are segregated during the traditional Christian Sunday morning worship hour but it does not mean that they are all hearing the same message. They are all gathered together in one place but are they all hearing the same message? Likewise for congregations that are multicultural, they may all be gathered together in one place but are they all hearing the same message. Now some of you might say of course they are they hear the message of:

- Love ones fellow person
- Salvation
- Peace
- God loves us all
- Christ died for our sins
- And on and on.

However, I submit to you that unless you are intentional in understanding and speaking to each sub group’s condition of existence, we may all be gathered together in one place but the message being preached and the message being heard by each group is not the same.

Therefore, segregated or integrated, the message to a congregation must be crafted in such a

manner that the underlying values and principles of that body of believers, allows them to more closely hear the same message.

Racial equity is often defined as fairness, justice and being impartial. However, I believe that in our efforts to measure racial equity we resort to transactional goals which ultimately drive us from fully internalizing the goal of racial equity.

Racial equity is something that in its purest form is not measured but lived.

When racial equity is alive and well, the actions of humanity are not dictated by quantifiable rules and regulations but instead are driven by a higher standard of living based on the inner qualities reflecting the goodness of God.

Needless to say, racial equity is a goal for how I will live my life and it is not stagnant but always evolving because humanity is constantly evolving. However, there is a core set of values that must be in place to provide some sense of direction.

I serve on the ministerial team at First Baptist of Silver Spring. We are a multicultural congregation. Thus, we have people from many cultures worshipping altogether in one place, but the message heard may not be the same for each worshipper. That is because when I look at us through my lens of racial equity, I would have to consider us a work in progress.

One of the characteristics that make us a work in progress is our intentionality.

- We are multicultural by choice
- Therefore we begin by embracing the beauty and strength that comes from having a racially diverse body of believers
- Though our tradition has placed us on a path of focusing on the external needs of our community (clothes closet, food closet and Sheppard's Table), we are slowly beginning to intentionally move toward a closer examination of the internal theological foundation of the church

- Clarifying that foundation is necessary to enable our worshippers to live out their lives in a manner reflective of the spiritual teachings of the church so that their humanity is driven from an internal set of guiding principles as opposed to external dictates
- Racial equity has to be lived not just on Sunday but 24/7.
- Racial equity must be something that **I am** not some pie in the sky transactional concept satisfied by numerical goals and quotas