

3-31-2012, COTR Texarkana

Title: Boxes

Purpose: Provoke Christians to live above prejudices, racism, hatred and violence and love people as Jesus commanded us to do.

Spiritual Truth: In a world of hatred and violence Christians can show others how to love instead of hate.

Text: Jn 13:31-35

Topic: Racism, Hatred, Love, Prejudice

Boxes

I. **Introduction** (I have a lengthy introduction to contextualize my message.)

A. This is the weekend traditionally called Palm Sunday. Over 2000 years ago Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey and began His “Passion Week”. On Friday He was crucified as a criminal. On the following Sunday He rose from the grave.

1. This week watch Mel Gibson’s, *“The Passion of the Christ”*
2. John 13:31-35 (NLT) [Jesus in the upper room after the Passover on Thurs night]
³¹ ...Jesus said, **“The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him...”** ³⁴ .. I am giving you a new commandment: **Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.** ³⁵ **Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”**
 - a. Jesus was looking through His suffering on the cross to the glory of His resurrection and ascension. To glorify means to give praise, to exalt, to attribute greatness. Through His sacrificial death Jesus brings glory to God. Through His resurrection and exaltation God gives glory to Jesus.
 - b. The cross was the greatest act of love the world has ever seen. Anticipating His violent death by those who hated Him, Jesus told His followers to be an example to the world by loving one another.

B. As we begin Passion Week, we have been vividly reminded that prejudice, racism and hatred are alive and well in America.

1. Pictures of Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman. (Put your seatbelt on.)
2. This is the most volatile issue in America today. A black teenager was returning from the store and had a conflict with a man who had white and Hispanic parents. Trayvon was shot and America wants to know why. His parents say it was murder motivated by racial hatred and they want justice. George’s parents say it was self defense and their son was not racist.
3. People are talking about racism, hatred, violence, racial profiling, prejudice, justice, self defense, gun control, political posturing, agendas and media bias.
4. The New Black Panther Party offered a \$10,000 bounty for Zimmerman’s citizen’s arrest. The DOJ had no comment.
5. A Congressman broke House rules by wearing a hoodie to show support.
6. A former NAACP leader and the niece of MLK condemned the involvement of Reverends Jackson and Sharpton for stirring racial hostility.
7. Trayvon’s twitter feeds were published. They were filled with calls for violence, profanity and sex. Now there’s a “killzimmerman” twitter feed.
8. President Obama said if He had a son he’d look like Trayvon. Days later, the parents of two white boys murdered by a convicted black man wanted to know why President Obama hadn’t expressed the same concern for them.
9. On Wednesday, 800 people in Texarkana marched calling for justice.

- a. Americans are on edge, demanding facts from law enforcement and racial tensions are rising. We all hope the truth comes out and justice prevails.
 - b. Have I got you on the edge of your seat?
- C. **My question to you today is this, “How should Christians act in a world filled with injustice, hatred and violence? Specifically, how should we treat other Christians?”**
 - 1. It was all our sins that led Jesus to the cross. Racism, hatred, murder, violence, lying, deception, greed, etc were nailed to the cross. Jesus told us how to treat one another and why. He said, Jn 13:35 (NLT) **“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”**
 - 2. The call to love doesn’t negate the need for justice or the right to defend yourself but Jesus demands that love be the driving force behind our actions.
 - 3. I’ve got a video to illustrate this. It’s about our prejudices and stereotypes.
 - a. Video: Sermon Spice, “*Invite 2*”. That’s better than a race riot!
 - 4. Today my intent is not to tell you who is guilty or give you facts you don’t have. I am challenging Christians to live above prejudices, racism, hatred and violence and treat people like Jesus commanded us.
- D. **Title: Boxes**
- E. **Purpose: Provoke Christians to live above prejudices, racism, hatred and violence and love people as Jesus commanded us to do.**
- F. **Spiritual Truth: In a world of hatred and violence Christians can show others how to love instead of hate.**

II. **Prejudice and discrimination are as old as the Bible**

- A. **John 4:6-9 (NLT)**

⁶...Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well.. ⁷ Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, **“Please give me a drink.”**...⁹The woman was surprised, for **Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans.** She said to Jesus, **“You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”**

 - 1. Racial/ ethnic prejudice dated back to the exile, approx. 500 years. The Samaritans were Jewish half breeds. Their Jewish forefathers had intermarried with Assyrians and thus had lost their racial purity.
 - 2. Women had no rights in their society. What we call “Gender discrimination” was a part of Roman, Greek and Jewish culture.
- B. **James 2:3-4 (NLT)**

³ If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor”—well, ⁴ **doesn’t this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives...** But if you **favor some people over others, you are committing a sin...**

 - 1. Social and economic standing divided people just like race and ethnicity.
 - 2. Pride tries to make us think we’re better than others because of our skin color, position in society, how much money we have, the type car we drive, etc.
- C. **In both these situations the words of Jesus ring clear: Jn 13:35 (NLT) “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”**
 - 1. The world divides us; it puts us in boxes because of our differences. The cross of cross unites us.
- D. **Illustrate with boxes: Who are you? What is your identity?**
 - 1. Imagine a government form: check the boxes that define who you are.

2. My boxes: Toyota truck, English, white man, 50+, dress conservative, Latvian descent and my family was robbed of their land in WW2, masters degree, hunter and own guns, conservative, married, Ms., Charismatic, ESV Bible.
3. I AM A CHRISTIAN before I am anything else.
4. America has become a society built on classes. Politicians pit us against each other. We're reminded that we're victims and entitled to rights. We have class action lawsuits

III. We're all related

A. Acts 17:26 (NCV) [All mankind is physically related through Adam]

²⁶ **God began by making one person, and from him came all the different people who live everywhere in the world.** God decided exactly when and where they must live.

1. We're all related, "one blood" referred to Adam.
2. Heaven will be filled with people different from you.
3. Tell your neighbor, "Hi cuz. When will you be having Thanksgiving dinner?"

B. Romans 12:5 (NIV) [Christians are spiritually related through Christ]

... in Christ we who are many form one body...

1. Coldwater 1st Baptist had an evacuation plan if a black came into the church. Most KKK members went to church on Sunday after burning a church on Saturday. Something is wrong with that.

IV. The cross is the great equalizer

A. Galatians 3:26-28 (NCV)

²⁶ You were all baptized into Christ, and so you were all clothed with Christ. This means that **you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** ²⁸ **In Christ, there is no difference between Jew and Greek, slave and free person, male and female. You are all the same in Christ Jesus.**

1. The cross is the great equalizer of cultural, socio-economic/ race and gender
 - a. We are supposed to be different from the world.
2. At the cross we aren't black or white, rich or poor, etc. We are all Christians, former sinners, forgiven and redeemed, brothers and sisters who share a common Heavenly Father.
 - a. We need to see people as God sees them not as a societal class in a box.
3. Let the words of Jesus ring clear: Jn 13:35 (NLT) **"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."**

V. Conclusion: Jesus told us to love our enemies. The world is watching.

A. Matthew 5:43-48 (NLT)

⁴³ **"You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy.** ⁴⁴ **But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!** ⁴⁵ **In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven...** ⁴⁶ **If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.... (Amp)** ⁴⁸ **You, therefore, must be perfect** [growing into complete maturity of godliness...having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity], **as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

1. At the cross Jesus didn't respond with hatred and violence. He responded in love; so should we.

VI. Response: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A. Challenge: Treat people like Jesus told us...walk in love toward all people especially our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ.

B. Do you need to forgive someone who hurt you in the past? Do you carry bitterness and hatred because of prejudice and racism/ the way you were treated?

C. Prayer: Souls