

MNO Devotional 2024

Questioning Privilege, Working Towards a Day Without Racism



Created by the MNO Synod Community Ministry Committee
February 2024



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA
MANITOBA/NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO SYNOD

www.MNOSynod.org

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INTRODUCTION

By Deacon Michelle Collins and Rev. Tyler Gingrich, MNO Synod Community Ministry Committee

The question we hear from Luke's gospel in the familiar passage about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) is: Who is my neighbour? A person who cares about legalities – about dotting I's and crossing T's – puts Jesus to the test; and Jesus turns the conversation from one about belief and duty, to relationship and daily life – from “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” to “who is my neighbour?”

There is an activity called “The Invisible Knapsack” that seeks to “guide students in understanding of white privilege as a concept and recognizing the ways their relationship to whiteness benefits or disadvantages them and impacts daily life... [The author,] Peggy McIntosh defines her white privilege “as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.” Another author, Layla F. Saad describes the relationship between white privilege and white supremacy – white privilege is the “reward that white and white-passing people receive in exchange for participating in the system of white supremacy... voluntarily or involuntarily.” White persons cannot escape the benefits of white privilege and must be able to name and understand the benefits that such privilege confers to do any meaningful work in dismantling the systems of oppression that benefit whites and disadvantage Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). This Invisible Knapsacks activity is an introductory activity in which white people can begin to do the work of addressing white privilege and its connection to white supremacy. ¹

Here is some of what McIntosh includes in the list of the Invisible Knapsack.² Consider how you would answer each statement...

- I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
- I can choose blemish cover or bandages in “flesh” colour and have them more less match my skin.

We find ways to separate ourselves, to build up our own sense of righteousness and superiority. These traits that separate us amount to unearned privilege. They are based on

¹ <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/invisible-knapsacks/>

² <https://www.wcwonline.org/Fact-Sheets-Briefs/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack-2>

things we have decided are better than another person, even though they are things we are born with and had no part in determining.

From a place of comfort and privilege, and having a part in the majority, it is so easy to diminish those who do not hold the same privilege – to put down people who are already on the margins of society.

That is why we need a reminder in our faith to call us to neighbourliness – to remind us of God’s grace, acceptance, and love for all.

The reflections in this study are intended to generate reflection and discussion around the topic of privilege as it relates to different facets of identity. Grounded in the scripture readings assigned in the RCL for the season of Lent 2024, this study invites the participants into a journey of reflection, lament, confession, and action as we continue to pray for and work towards a day without Racism. The study is designed to be a 5-session study, that can be covered in the five weeks of Lent or through whatever time-frame the group decides. There is a brief resource list included for ongoing learning and discussion.

Format for each session

The scripture passage for each session, from the Inclusive Bible, is included at the end of the study. Leaders may choose to use this version of the text or provide the reading for each session in a different translation. Each reflection has been written by a member of the MNO Synod or a partner ministry.

Each session can take between 45-90 minutes. After a brief check-in, allowing participants to introduce themselves, share highlights or challenges from the week, and transition into a space of mutual care and conversation, the leader may begin with a simple word of prayer or moment of silence. Invite one or more participants to read the passage assigned for each reflection. Review the reflection together, either aloud or silently. Consider some of the following or similar discussion questions:

1. What did you hear that resonates with you?
2. What did you hear in the reflection that challenges you?
3. Where do you see privilege and/or racism impacting or influencing the author’s reflection?
4. What role does prayer, action, advocacy and/or ongoing learning play in challenging privilege and promoting anti-racism?
5. What word of hope or promise do you want to take with you for the week ahead?

Consider ending each session by sharing an action that each participant might take into the following week, as well as a word of prayer or blessing.

A final word

The hope of the MNO Synod Community Ministry Committee is that this resource will be a tool for conversations, reflections and discussions within our synod as we seek to more intentionally engage and respond to issues of injustice and inequality in our communities. Thanks to each contributor for sharing your insight and experiences with us.

WEEK ONE

written by Rhonda Gorham
Ministry Manager, Lutheran Urban Ministry Corp. (Treaty 1)

www.TheUrban.ca

In this introduction and overview of the ministry of The Urban, Jesus' invitation to discipleship is modeled through relationships built with a marginalized community.

Text for reflection: Mark 8:31-38

In this gospel reading, Jesus is adamant that discipleship comes with a cost. Gaining the world and forfeiting one's life (soul) is a warning against having a self-serving focus on human things rather than divine. Compassion toward the marginalized is a component of the entreaty of Christ to love our neighbour as ourselves. In our world today, the evening news is filled with the rise of xenophobia, anti-LGBTQIA+, biases, generalizations, and covert prejudice toward those of other faiths, colours, cultures and toward those struggling in poverty. Jesus' ministry was primarily among the marginalized. The Lutheran Urban Ministry (the Urban), renting in the lower level of Lutheran Church of the Cross, is a non-profit corporation reaching out to people living on the margins in the west end of Winnipeg. Fellowship, emotional support, spiritual care, worship services, sharing circles, and bagged meals to go feed the spirit and the body.



What are some examples of marginalization? Poverty, mental/physical disabilities, addictions, language barriers, insecure housing/uncaring landlords, job loss, learning disabilities, and aging out of foster care.

Who are the people who come to the Urban? Families, grandmas/grandpas with custody, men living in group homes and rooming houses, young single and elderly women living alone. They are Indigenous, Caucasian, African, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern. At any given time, there are always a few attending who are unhoused (living on the street or couch surfing). A lot of uncertainty in life, trauma, grief and loss, physical and/or emotional pain, and often loneliness - but I see such incredible resilience, faith, humour, and generosity of spirit in the face of adversity. The Lutheran Urban Ministry offers a really unique opportunity to us Lutherans who sit in "the comfortable pews": the invitation to ring the doorbell and come and sit with us in our sharing circles for great fellowship, and coffee/tea and dessert. Get to know the people who come to the Urban through conversation and a new understanding of those who attend and why we have this wonderful outreach within the umbrella of the MNO.

Governor-General Mary Simon remarked that "reconciliation is getting to know each other" and it's so true. I feel so privileged to know the people who come to the Urban.

It's often difficult and challenging to step out of our comfort zones of friends and family. Getting to know "the other" - whether it's becoming friends with the new Muslim neighbours two doors down, or joining a social justice group, or dropping in to one of our men's, women's or co-ed sharing circles at the Urban, or helping at the local neighbourhood foodbank and getting to know the clients - are just a few examples of discipleship and feeding the soul.

WEEK TWO

written by Rev. Michael Kurtz
Pastor at First Lutheran Church, Winnipeg (Treaty 1)

www.FirstLutheranWinnipeg.ca

In this description of a congregation's ministry to its neighbours, awareness about the suffering of others leads to accompaniment and advocacy.

Text for reflection: Psalm 22

He did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted. (Psalm 22:24a)

Psalm 22 begins with the cries of one who is suffering, and the suffering results in her feeling less than human, like a worm beset by bulls and dogs and lions and oxen. Her friends mock her and God is seemingly absent to her. My God, my God, she cries, why have you forsaken me?

The person feels invisible, forsaken by those around her, and seemingly forsaken by God.

Eventually something happens, something changes, and the Psalm transforms from being one of lament to one of thanksgiving and praise as she becomes aware of God's presence in her suffering. And not just any thanksgiving, but one of the most over-the-top thanksgivings in the Bible, as she imagines that all peoples will praise God for God's presence in her suffering: Israelites, non-Israelites, the dead and even yet unborn future generations. The simple knowledge of God's presence is enough to move her to tremendous praise and thanksgiving.

So what happens?

The first time the Psalmist acknowledges experiencing God's presence is in "the midst of the congregation." In the midst of the people. There is where she comes to know God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted.

In my congregation, we have been working closely with women immigrants and refugees from South Sudan for the past several years. What I came to learn very quickly was what one of the women told me early on: "Winnipeg is very nice. But still, even here, when you are an African woman, you are invisible."

I experienced this first hand when she asked me to accompany her to a lawyer's office as she sought help in applying for a charitable status number for her organization. She had been several times already and had gotten no action, confirming her statement that African women are essentially invisible to privileged white people. She asked me to simply accompany her as a white male person to see what difference it made. We met with the lawyer and got action almost immediately, despite the fact that I hardly said a word. The CRA application went in, the application was approved, and today The Excel Empowerment Centre helps scores of immigrant women from all backgrounds in improving their English language skills, computer skills, and job-training skills.

Accompanying my friend was one simple way in which privilege could be shared. Even as we both lamented that such a step was necessary, it did enable something to happen which otherwise may not have happened. The Excel Empowerment Centre is invisible no

more. When we in the church say we accompany people in their journeys, it often means literally that: a physical, incarnational accompaniment and advocacy.

For myself, I learned something shocking about the privilege of white, male genetics. I found the outcome of this particular accompanying hard to believe, and it opened my eyes in a real way to the invisibility our African sisters endure every day in our city. I became more sensitive to the affliction of the afflicted and even more to how subtle racism and sexism can be. I lamented that, but my lament turned to thanksgiving in light of all the Excel Empowerment Centre has accomplished. My friend, in turn, was grateful for the simple act of accompaniment and presence.

The Anglican priest Daniel Clendenin has observed in a very nice phrase that, "The absence of God is best met by the presence of God's people." Long ago, the writer of Psalm 22 discovered this to be true and it remains true. For people of privilege, one way we can express our solidarity with the marginalized is in the simple act of physical, incarnational accompaniment. For God does not abhor the affliction of the afflicted.

Challenge: who are the people in your congregation's neighbourhood who could benefit from your presence or accompaniment?



WEEK THREE

written by Rev. Heather Parrott-Howdle
Pastor at Erickson Lutheran Church, Erickson (Treaty 4)

www.EricksonLutheranChurch.ca

This reflection on the text invites deeper awareness and action towards genuine inclusion and hospitality.

Text for reflection: John 2:13-22

The cleansing-of-the-temple story appears in all four gospels, though in the final chapters of the synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). John's version has distinctive additions: sheep and cattle, a whip of cords, and the pouring out of coins. John's Jesus is concerned with "making my Father's house a marketplace!" (John 2:16). The following dialogue juxtaposes Jesus' zeal for God's house with a declaration of Jesus' superiority to the physical temple as the place where God and humanity meet. Jesus sought to remove grossly commercialized practices that corrupted the temple's sacredness and obstructed its wide accessibility.

This Lenten season, our texts invite us to consider what sacred things have become idols for us, obstructing truer and more faithful devotion to the God who meets us in Christ. And not just what sacred things have become idols but that show the privilege that we have in many of the 'temples' that we worship in. How accessible are they to those of few means, of few abilities and from minorities, like BIPOC, or of diverse gender identities, gender expressions, different ages, and matriarchal cultures.

As a cis-gender female in a same gender relationship for 32 years, the ten commandments' progressive vision is limited by their tacit support of slavery (Exodus 20:10) and an understanding that equates women with property (20:17). Even though Luther's interpretation of the ten commandments in the Small Catechism helps us with a bit more expansive views, these are still troubling terms that have been used to support gender-based violence and oppression.

We need to understand the context of the time and place and know that Jesus showed inclusion and respect for women as apostles which needs to be taken as the highest authority on this issue. He also acknowledged their unwavering faith by revealing many of his teachings to them first.

We should recognize that our congregations, with our pledge drives, youth group fundraisers, and wedding fees, might resemble a marketplace to Jesus today. Indeed, some of the practices Jesus critiques are necessary for the functioning of a religious organization, but how far do we go?

Our faith allows us to see that we are only free when we are "servant[s] of all" (Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian"). Faith brings us to know that we are fully saint and sinner, and still justified by God's grace. And at the center of our faith is the cross!

So how do we live out being the 'servant of all' without further oppressing or placing our own ways on others in sharing the good news?

The reality is that most of our ways of spreading the good news are founded on colonial structures, imperial beliefs and traditions. Most of our pictures in our churches are of white Anglo-Saxon looking Jesus, Mary and disciples. Many of our sanctuaries are not wheelchair accessible, and most of our liturgy and music is full of white patriarchal, heteronormative terminology that does not speak to the diverse reality of society. This

lack of inclusion silences people that seek to know God's love through their own lens and lived experience.

How do we shed the shield of privilege that excludes people from our church/temple and bring the focus to the temple in Jesus' life, death and resurrection?

How do we recognize our privilege and shed it without being defensive, without the white fragility: which are statements like 'I/we/my parents had to struggle too! This is not about comparing any of our own pain and suffering with an oppressed group, as it judges and dismisses their experiences.

I would suggest that inviting those that are different from you to share their stories of faith, their journey and invite them to share what has prevented them from joining our worship or faith gatherings? Think about applying the Platinum Rule and not the Golden Rule. The Platinum Rule coined by Dr. Harvey Chochinov validates person-centered care and assistance because it means knowing who the patients are as a person and their social location. The Platinum Rule has us considering "doing unto people as they would want done unto themselves" versus the Golden Rule which says "Treat others the way we would want to be treated". The Golden Rule falls short of being able to provide what a person needs or may want because their lived experiences and outlook or worldview may be substantially different from our own. Therefore, we are not then a reliable measure of their needs, values or goals.

Other questions to ponder on our Lenten journey of being more aware and taking action:

Do they feel welcome in our usual worship spaces? Are they able to hear and see themselves in the liturgy? Does the pastoral reflection resonate with their social location and experience of God?

How do our holy spaces help us in our faith? How might our love of them become an idol or another sign of our privilege?

When does following Jesus call us to righteous anger?

When our politicians start to oppress others and restrict freedoms that we take for granted. Stand up and walk in rallies or protests that support justice like the Pride Parades, attend School Division meetings where 2SLGBTQAI+ oppression and discriminatory groups are presenting, learn about the true history of this land, and learn about the issues that are negatively impacting the BIPOC communities on a daily basis.

A visioning with your faith community to learn how to be aware of the privilege and colonial nature of our church, our worship practices and liturgy can be a good start to show that our faith community is focussed on the Cross and that the 'temple' is in Jesus, in God's love, mercy and grace for each of us, each neighbour. Turn over the tables of white heteronormative ways that will show others that are different, that they are also beloved and are truly welcomed and embodied in our spaces. Ask them to help make our spaces welcoming to them!

Does this sound like a lot? If you answer yes, it's because we are privileged to not be affected by most of what minorities are dealing with.

We hope that every worship service and reflection/sermon will inspire each of us to serve God by serving one another keeping in mind the diverse reality of our communities and our neighbors that has always existed. I have heard homophobic words, racial slurs,

misogyny in some of the churches I have attended. I was not able to hear the ‘good news’ because those temples did not ‘live out’ the good news!

We pray that our being ‘servant’ to all means that we act on our faith for others ‘with’ them.

In the gospel we see Jesus cleanse the temple, an action that shows us how he felt about institutional greed and abuses of power and privilege. This is our opportunity to face the impact of communal sins that include racism, sexism, homophobia, misogyny, and xenophobia.

We need to point them out and name just how much they weigh down our society, our church, our communities and us as individuals. As we move through this Lenten journey from shedding privilege to service, we will begin to see the true temple of Jesus being lived out.

References:

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WEEK FOUR

written by Rev. Dr. Alan Lai
Principal of Centre for Christian Studies (Treaty 1)

www.CCSonline.ca

In this reflection, a familiar passage is reframed to expand awareness and reflection on current realities.

Text for reflection: John 3:14-21

God Loved the World Indeed.

When I was studying in New York City, I didn't miss a chance to go to the Yankee Stadium to watch a baseball game. I assure you there are wonderful moments only be experienced in the stadium, and not on television. The game I watched was the New York Yankees playing against the Boston Red Sox, a classic. In the middle of the game, a man sitting in front of me suddenly stood up and waved a handwritten cardboard that read John 3:16 in super large letters. A few seconds later, he sat down and continued watching the game. I thought to myself, what had he accomplished? I did not doubt his love for the Bible or God. What did he bring to world peace, harmonious coexistence among nations and communities?

One of the important themes in the Gospel of John is the contrast between light and darkness. In John's mind, darkness and light cannot be together. Those who follow Jesus are in the light. If not, then the rest are living in darkness; but even worse, they are doing evil things. It may sound binary in contemporary minds.

John 3 is well-known and may have been understood in various theological directions. Today I ask: Are all those who do not follow Jesus, evildoers? Are people who aren't Christians, living in the dark? You know where I am going. Even in my short lifetime I have seen enough Christian evildoers or have participated in unjust social systems. They didn't raise their voice for the oppressed and the marginalized. On the other hand, I come to know many who are not professed Christians living in the light the way I understand Jesus is asking us to do.

John's Gospel was written to respond to specific social and national situations. More than two thousand years have passed, and history has shown us that those who follow Jesus may not necessarily do things that honour God's will. People who do not follow Jesus do not necessarily do things that are contrary to God's will. The kinds of questions we ask today would have been impossible for John to answer back then.

Faith in Christ invites us to address complex issues of our time: racism, sexism, inequality, and discrimination. As Christians, we must resist using the gospel and the Bible as weapons to attack others, as if we have the right to do so. No! We don't. Christians are still learning and haven't perfected and never will be the act of following. Instead, we need to have Thomas's mentality of doubting or Nicodemus' desire of searching. The gospel is an invitation for us to go outside our comfort zone to take a serious look at the troubled world. Not a tool to make quick conclusions, but to ponder and to ask tough questions. We have a duty to exercise suspicion when we encounter overly simplistic answers. The Christian message of love requires actions of love, not just words of love.

For our personal reflections, how should we treat biblical texts that seem to be judgemental or painted in black and white? What opportunities do we have to encounter people of other faith and cultural traditions and to learn from them?



WEEK FIVE

written by Rev. Tyler Gingrich
Pastor at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Winnipeg (Treaty 1)

www.GloriaDeiWinnipeg.org

In this reflection, the paradox of who we are and who we are still becoming is held together with God's ongoing promise of renewal and restoration.

Text for reflection: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ...I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." (vss.33-34)

I love this passage for a number of reasons, including: it's so Lutheran! We read this passage on Reformation Sunday! It points to a new day; it recalls a previous time, but it speaks with hope of a time-to-come.

As the season of Lent – of prayer, of fasting, of charitable giving – starts to give way towards the days of Holy Week and Easter, we might recall where we've been and where we're going.

As Lutheran congregations, we are steeped in traditions that go back centuries. On the North American continent, we have carried the traditions of Germans and Scandinavians in our non-Indigenous society. But even those have changed, adapted, moved with the times: how many of us speak German, or one of the Scandinavian languages? (And if you do: that's really good!) I love it when lefse or vinarterta show up at potlucks!

You see, a "new covenant" (or "new commandment," such as we hear on Maundy Thursday) points us to something that may mean a departure from what we've known. And yet, maybe the kernel is still the same; maybe we're hanging on to a baby while letting go of the bath-water!

And we've all navigated uncertain times that have lead to where we are, now. We can easily look to pre-internet church where having an over-head projector with words projected on a screen was "hip," versus how we've emerged from the pandemic as the social media announcing, YouTube-streaming, internet-savvy communities we've become!

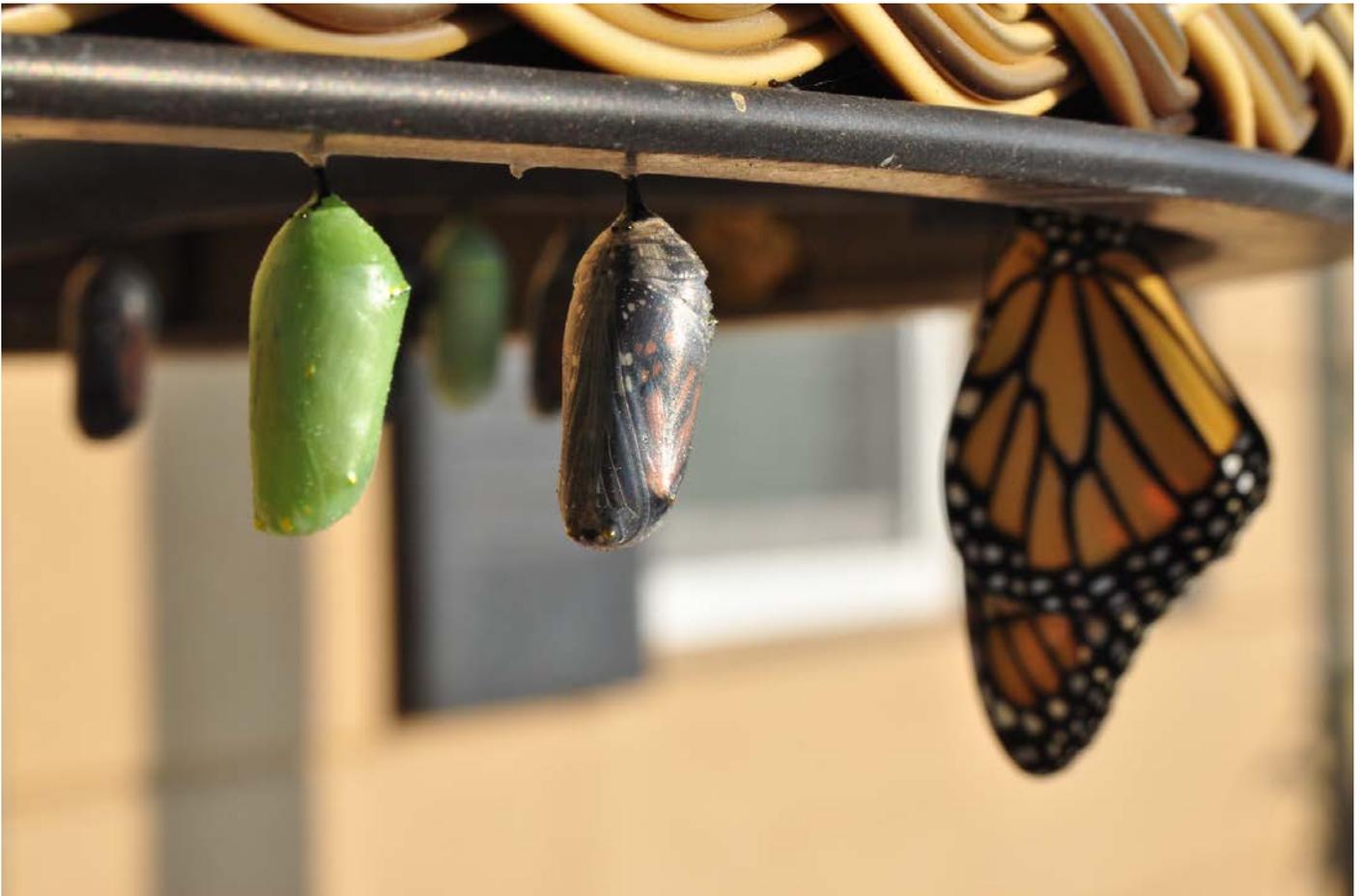
We can shift. I think that is what the prophet, Jeremiah, is getting at: God is in us, God's hope for humanity is in us. And we can move to that place perhaps more easily than we think – but it does require regular discernment and thoughtfulness. It requires us to listen to the law on our hearts, so to speak!

Because... it's not on paper in front of us – it's on our hearts! And we are forgiven – we're being shown mercy so we might show forgiveness and mercy in our lives! Our sin is no longer remembered. What is that except for love?

This new day calls out of us a new response: we can let go of things we've clung to previously.

A comment was made, recently, on social media about the new year and pronouns: “You know that deliberate mental shift you’re having to do right now to write the date as 24 instead of 23? That’s how you learn someone’s pronouns. See? You can do it!”

Challenge: Do you see images and words in your church space that cling to an old, previously-comfortable place for Lutheran Christians? And, if so, can those images or words be taken down or replaced with thoughtful pieces that open you and your community to those who may be different than you?



BIBLE PASSAGES

(from *The Inclusive Bible*)

Mark 8:31-38

³¹Then Jesus began to teach them that the Promised One had to suffer much, be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and religious scholars, be put to death, and rise again three days later. ³²Jesus said these things quite openly.

Peter then took him aside and began to take issue with him. ³³ At this, Jesus turned around and, eyeing the disciples, reprimanded Peter: "Get out of my sight, you Satan! You are judging by human standards rather than by God's!"

³⁴ Jesus summoned the crowd and the disciples and said,

"If you wish to come after me, you must deny your very self, take up your cross and follow in my footsteps. ³⁵ If you would save your life, you'll lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake, you'll save it. ³⁶ What would you gain if you were to win the whole world but lose your self in the process?"

³⁷ What can you offer in exchange for your soul? ³⁸ Whoever in this faithless and corrupt generation is ashamed of me and my words will find, in turn, that the Promised One and the holy angels will be ashamed of that person, when all stand before our God in glory."

Psalm 22

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far away, so far from saving me,
so far from the words of my groaning?

² I cry all day, my God, but you never answer;
I call all night long, and sleep deserts me.

³ But you, Holy One —
you sit enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴ Our ancestors put their trust in you; they trusted and you rescued them;

⁵ they cried to you and were saved;
they trusted you and were never disappointed.

⁶ Yet here I am, more worm than human, the scorn of humanity, an object of ridicule:

⁷ all who see me mock me;
they shake their heads and sneer,

⁸ "You trust in God? Ha! Let God save you now!
If God is your friend, let God rescue you!"

⁹ Yet you drew me out of the womb; you nestled me in my mother's bosom;

¹⁰ you cradled me in your lap from my birth;
from my mother's womb you have been my God.

¹¹ Don't stand aside now that trouble is near
I have no one to help me!

¹² My enemies are like a herd of bulls surrounding me, like the strong bulls of Bashan closing in on me;
¹³ with jaws open wide to swallow me, they're like lions tearing their prey, and roaring.
¹⁴ I am like water draining away; my bones are all disjointed;
 my heart is like wax melting inside me.
¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a piece of clay pottery
 and my tongue is stuck to the roof of my mouth: you lay me down in dusty death.
¹⁶ A pack of dogs surrounds me; a gang of brigands close me in; they pierce my hands and feet.
¹⁷ I can count every one of my bones, and there they stare at me, gloating.
¹⁸ They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothes.
¹⁹ But you, YHWH, don't be far off!
 My strength, hurry to help me!
²⁰ Rescue my life from the sword, my dear life from the power of these dogs!
²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth, my poor soul from the wild bull's horns!
²² Then I will proclaim your Name to my sisters and brothers,
 and praise you in the full assembly:
²³ "You who worship YHWH, give praise!
 Daughters of Leah, daughters of Rachel, glorify YHWH!
 Sons of Jacob, fall down and worship!
²⁴ For God has not despised — not disdained — the suffering of those in pain!
 God didn't hide
 but answered them when they cried for help!"
²⁵ You are the theme of my praise in the Great Assembly,
 and I will fulfill my vows in the presence of your worshipers.
²⁶ Those who are poor will eat and be satisfied, those who seek you will give you praise — long life
to their hearts!
²⁷ The whole earth, from one end to the other, will remember and come back to you;
 all the families of the nations will bow down to you.
²⁸ For yours is the kingdom, you Ruler of nations!
²⁹ Those who had feasted and devoured the poor — now they'll bow down;
 the most affluent in the land will kneel before you.
 They all go down to the dust and none can keep themselves alive.
³⁰ But my children will be faithful to you,
 and they will be told about YHWH for generations to come.
³¹ They will come and proclaim your justice to a people yet unborn:
 "All this YHWH has done!"

John 2:13-22

¹³ Since it was almost the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴ In the Temple, he found people selling cattle, sheep and pigeons, while moneychangers sat at their counters.

¹⁵ Making a whip out of cords, Jesus drove them all out of the Temple even the cattle and sheep—and overturned the tables of the money changers, scattering their coins, ¹⁶ Then he faced the pigeon sellers: "Take all this out of here! Stop turning God's house into a market!" ¹⁷ The disciples remembered the words of scripture: "Zeal for your house consumes me."

¹⁸ The Temple authorities intervened and said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you've done?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰ They retorted, "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you're going to raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But the temple he was speaking of was his body. ²² It was only after Jesus had been raised from the dead that the disciples remembered this statement and believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

John 3:14-21

¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the Chosen One must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in the Chosen One might have eternal life.

¹⁶ Yes, God so loved the world as to give the Only Begotten One,
that whoever believes may not die, but have eternal life.

¹⁷ God sent the Only Begotten into the world not to condemn the world, but that through the Only Begotten the world might be saved.

¹⁸ Whoever believes in the Only Begotten avoids judgment, but whoever doesn't believe is judged already for not believing in the name of the Only Begotten of God.

¹⁹ On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light came into the world, people showed they preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil.

²⁰ Indeed, people who do wrong hate the light and avoid it, for fear their actions will be exposed;

²¹ but people who live by the truth come out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what they do is done in God."

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, says YHWH, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them up out of the land of Egypt — a covenant they broke, though I was their spouse, says YHWH. ³³ But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says YHWH: I will put my Law in their minds and on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

³⁴ "No longer will they need to teach one another or remind one another to listen to YHWH. All of them, high and low alike, will listen to me, says YHWH, for I will forgive their misdeeds and will remember their sins no more.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If your congregation would like to have more intentional discussion about how you might respond to your community, please contact:

- Rev. David Lowe, Community Ministry Committee Chair (revrdlowe@hotmail.com)
- Deacon Michelle Collins, Assistant to the Bishop (mcollins@elcic.ca)
- Carmen Ramirez, Assistant to the National Bishop: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (cramirez@elcic.ca)

ELCIC website with resources:

<https://elcic.ca/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>

Books:

“Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US” by Lenny Duncan (Fortress Press, 2019)

“White Privilege: Why It’s So Hard For White People To Talk About Racism” by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon Press, 2018)

“Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor” by Layla F. Saad (Blackstone Publishing, 2020)

Videos:

“What Is Privilege?” (4 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ>

“How to Recognize Privilege – And Uplift Those Without It” (15 mins)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rpPyQkjc3I