***Race, God and the church***

**3: How the church is part of the solution**

discussion guide

based on **Ephesians 2.8-22** (Linked to sermon from 2/5/21)

which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks

*This was part of a series: Race, God and the church*

Intro: Have you had any more conversations with people from cultures or nations different to our own about their experiences of racism? If so, what did you learn?

*Before becoming Christians, the Jews and Gentiles wouldn’t have mixed at all. It was a challenge for all the early churches to learn how to incorporate people from such different cultural backgrounds into one church.*

**Read Ephesians 2.14-18**

*This is the core of this passage.*

What are the biggest ‘dividing walls of hostility’ in our world today, comparable to the Jewish – Gentile division in the first century?

What is God’s purpose in healing such deep divisions?

How did he achieve it?

Dan said that “Jesus didn’t just die to reconcile you and me to Christ, but also to bring racial reconciliation.” Is that a fair summary of these verses? If not, why not? If it is, how often do we include this as part of our gospel message?

**Read Ephesians 2.8-13**

*Paul is speaking primarily to Gentile Christians – which includes most of us.*

What was the Gentiles’ status before Christ?

When have you felt ‘separate’ or ‘excluded’ from a group?

How might some people (maybe because of race) feel ‘excluded’ from a church?

On what basis have Gentiles been ‘brought near’ (see also v17 those who are ‘far away’)?

Dan said that “only the gospel has the power to bring us all together as equals” – as we all kneel at the cross, in awe of God’s grace. Do you agree / disagree? Why?

Paul puts great emphasis on the cross, the shedding of Jesus’ blood. Why do you think the cross is so significant in enabling / empowering racial reconciliation?

**Read Ephesians 2.19-22**

Dan focused on the idea of all believers (whatever our racial or cultural background) now being part of the *same household* of God, rather than just neighbours.

Think of ‘households’ you’ve been part of where you’ve had to learn to accept people who are quite different to you, and come to value them.

How should being part of the same household affect the way we relate to people in church from other ethnic or cultural backgrounds to ourselves?

Dan said that “as the church lives out the gospel message, it is uniquely placed to implement racial reconciliation”. Do you agree / disagree?

Is there a particular step you need to take, as part of the church, to begin living this out? (Now might be a good time to watch the Hong Kong ready church video, including the brief interview with Paul Thaxter about the current Southampton scene.)

Plenty of other resources on this whole topic of Race, God and the church are available at www.stjamesbythepark.org/blog/the-church-and-racism-further-links