

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS following Paul's talk on 'Black Lives Matter', Sunday 14 June 2020

This week, rather than formal notes or questions, I want to invite us all to a period of reflection. There's a lot of material here, so please have a look through and see what stands out to you. Begin there. That may be all you do, which is fine. Or you may want to move on to other sections. Pray before, during and after reading:

'Father God, show me what response you are seeking of me, as I seek to bring the presence of Jesus into this world by the power of the Holy Spirit'

The material is grouped under 4 headings

- Bible
- Other Sources
- Action
- Prayer

BIBLE

Read Colossians 3:11 a few times

Read Colossians 3:1-14 and see the sections

- 1-4: Paul reminds us, 'you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God': all that characterised our brokenness, including our need to define self over against the other, has been crucified
- 5-10: Paul urges us to the hard labour of walking out that putting to death of everything that works against community and unity
- 12-14: Paul encourages us to clothe ourselves in what nurtures and builds up community and unity
- 11: is the hinge around which these sections move. Old (or present) human distinctions don't count in the Kingdom of God

Reflect for a time on the one remaining distinction within humankind, the only one which counts: those who know Jesus and those who don't. Whereas the human default is to seek power over 'the other,' the way of Jesus is to abandon power in favour of service. Spend time praying for those you know who don't yet know Jesus.

Read the story of Hagar, in Genesis 16 and Genesis 21:1-21. What does her story reveal of God's heart to the lowest of the low?

Read Colossians 3:25 – 4:1

Remember that antiquity offered plenty of teaching about the responsibilities of wives, children and slaves. Until Paul, it had no comparable teaching about the responsibilities of husbands, parents and masters. It may not seem revolutionary to us, but it was.

Paul and his fellow early Christians had no earthly power to overthrow the Empire or its system of slavery on which it depended utterly (fully one third of the adult population of Rome's Empire were slaves).

But Paul knew that the power of the gospel and the new creation it was bringing in was more effective than any human revolution.

Read Philemon

Philemon led one of the house churches in Colossae (Philemon 2).

Paul has met Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, while in prison and led him to faith (Philemon 10). Paul is now sending him back to Philemon. See how Paul writes in vv 12-17. It's quite extraordinary. I do not believe that there is any movement other than Christianity, when followed purely, that can effect this sort of societal transformation.

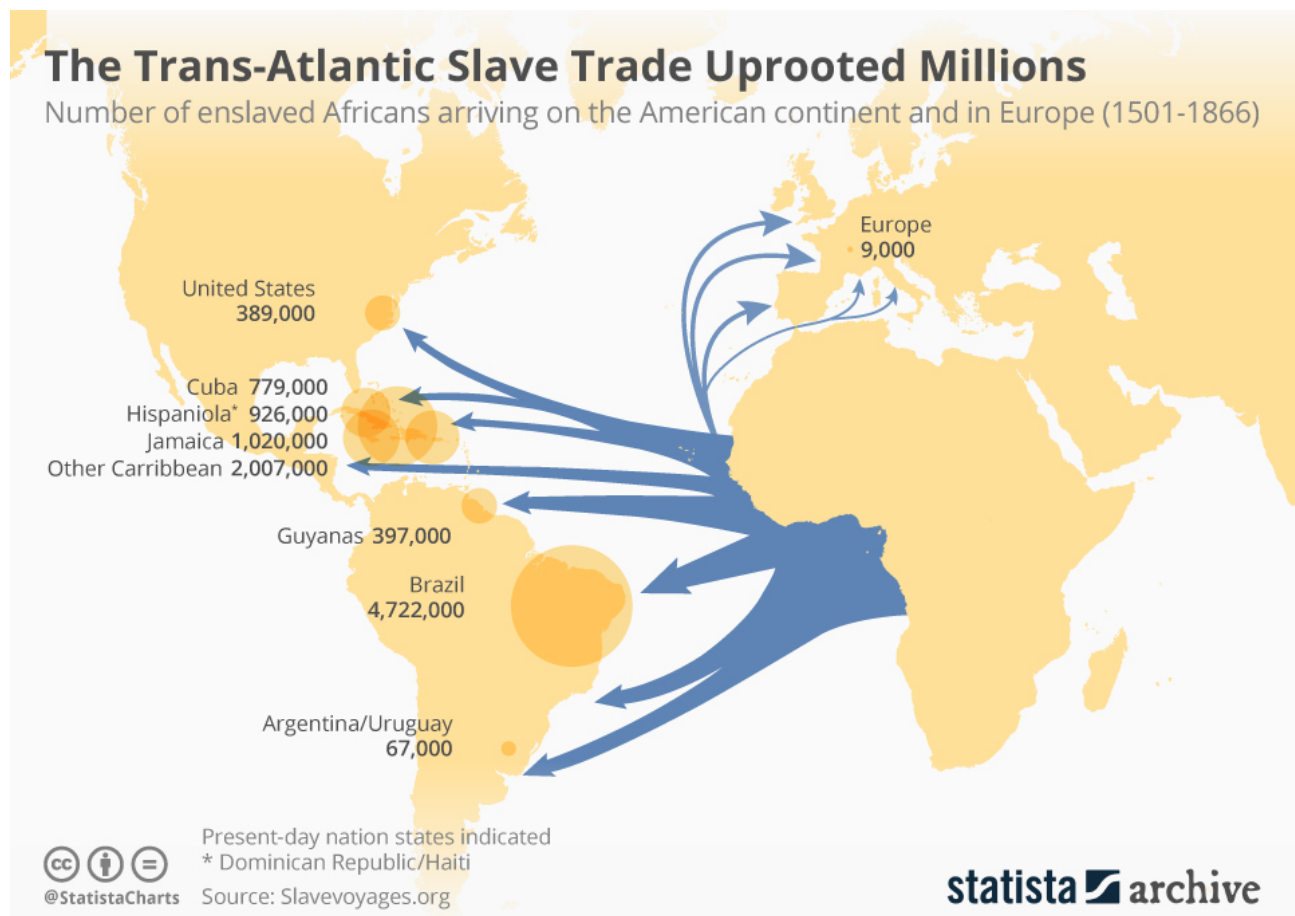
What would that look like today?

Read Ephesians 2:14-18. Taken from Who?

¹⁴ For as long as we can remember, Jews and Gentiles have been at each other's throats, divided by a wall of hatred. Jesus has put an end to this, at great cost. ¹⁵ As nails pierced his body he shattered that ancient wall with its graffiti of rules and regulations. His body was broken so that we might be mended. ¹⁶ As he died, so did the war between us. ¹⁷ He endured agony to reconcile us all, bringing the gift of peace to a world weary of fighting. ¹⁸ As his life ended, a new humanity was born and everyone who trusts in him enjoys free access to God the Father through his Holy Spirit.

OTHER SOURCES

Map of the North Atlantic Slave Trade



Bristol Mayor, Marvin Rees

on race, statues and police on Castbox. <https://castbox.fm/vb/273838811>

Statement by Bishop Viv

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/news/statement-from-the-rt-revd-vivienne-faull-bishop-of-bristol-.php>

Personal reflection by the Revd Cathy Okoronkwo (includes the poem 'I can't breathe')

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/news/a-personal-response-to-blacklivesmatter.php>

Global Leadership Network

The grave injustices we've been witnessing against people of color causes discomfort, distress, exasperation and even anger.

It is the decades of ongoing pain and inequality of racism and discrimination that fuels the public and sometimes violent response to the narrative going on around us. And while you may or may not agree with the nature of every response, we must call racism sin, and speak out against the continuous action of injustice that prevails, *we cannot turn a blind eye or remain silent.*

As we acknowledge the events that have led us to this point, it is important to us as a leadership organization for us to connect with those of you in our network and partners speaking out on racial justice. Leaders like you continue to provide for us a deep well of experience and wisdom that can provide guidance and insight during this critical time.

Now you can go to GlobalLeadership.org/Social-Justice to find resources from The Global Leadership Summit faculty alumni like Bryan Stevenson, Bishop T.D. Jakes, Gary Haugen, and several others as they discuss how to address racial injustice in our everyday lives. And as you follow us on social media, you can find even more resources being shared from our faculty alumni.

Additionally, we are actively working on developing free events with our partners and experts in this field. Be on the lookout as we announce those in the coming days. If you have suggestions for resources or leaders we should be talking to on this topic, feel free to let us know.

Why are we doing this? Because as leaders, you and I are called to listen, learn and act.

Because in the midst of all the darkness, we remain:

- People of faith
- People who have been called to love one another
- People who see each person as made in the image of God
- People who have been called to live and love like Jesus
- People who recognize injustice and racism as sinful
- People who reach out to comfort the afflicted and weep with those who weep
- People who hunger and thirst for righteousness
- People who are blessed as peacemakers

In Scripture, the word *justice* very simply means to make *right*.

What is our call today in the midst of all the unrest and violence? To do justice, to love mercy and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). It is to respond by doing what we can to make things right. It is to name what is wrong and unjust and not be content to let it continue to fester, multiply or even exist.

We must wade into the fray. We must speak up for those on the margins. We must identify what is wrong and work for what is good.

Using our influence to love mercy and do justice is what leaders do.

Together in the cause,

Tom De Vries
President and CEO
Global Leadership Network

ACTION

SARI (Standing against racism and inequality) one of only four organisations like this across the country, are organising a free awareness session on hate crime (particularly with a focus on racism) on Thursday 18 June on zoom at 2pm.

If you are interested in attending, then please register your interest on the email address at the bottom of this email and they will send you the zoom link.

It is crucial that we are talking and learning together. This session won't have a faith focus and joining with others from across the city. If this date is not possible then please contact SARI to let them know as they are up for running another session over the next week.

Ebenezer Church
286 Filton Avenue | Horfield | Bristol, BS7 0BA
0117 9791399 | info@ebe.org.uk

Hope at Home (a challenge to open homes to the survivors of modern slavery: flier attached)

Dear All,

Whatever we think about the act of defiance in removing Edward Colston's statue a few days ago, the message that we all need to play our part to bring God's plan of freedom for the captives and of equality and justice for all is loud and clear.

Slavery was abhorrent. To God's heart and to ours. It still is.

At Hope at Home, we provide an opportunity for Christians to act defiantly in the face of racism and slavery by welcoming a survivor into their homes as a houseguest.

Isaiah 58 tells us all we need to know about how to do this:

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”*

We, as Christians right now, are called to act.

People who have survived slavery in our country are often made destitute and homeless, leading to them being exploited all over again. We don't believe this is what God wants for them.

So, our act of defiance is love. We love them. We welcome them. We accept them. We encourage them to make their own choices and rebuild their lives. And we learn from them. Our children's lives are enriched by our new friends. We face our own prejudices head-on. We see our hearts change for the better.

We need help. We can't do this alone and in Bristol we need hosts urgently. Please help us find people with spare rooms and big hearts who can join us in this act of defiance against slavery and racism.

- ***Please share this attached flier with all your church members and networks.***
- ***Please 'like' and share our facebook page and twitter posts.***
- ***Please respond to this email with a 'yes' if you'd like to know more about us.***
- ***Please invite us to zoom into your church meetings for 5-10 minutes to explain what we do and how we work.***

We know there's a pandemic going on, which is why we've put in lots of extra measures to ensure the safety of our hosts, guests and the wider community.

Thank you for your help.

Helen Hodgson

Operations and Development Manager

07923 246561

www.hopeathome.org.uk

Please note my current working hours are Monday-Thursday 9-2

PRAYER

Bristol has quite unexpectedly found itself in the world's spotlight as a result of racial strife in the U.S. Countless column inches have appeared about a "city in the south-west of the U.K." and journalists have rushed to find out more about a 17th century director of a shipping company. Our current mayor has found himself being quoted far wider than he might expect, and policing methods have come under the spotlight in contrast to those used in some parts of the U.S.

As expected the narrative does not mention the continuing wave of prayer which we know is a key factor in today's Bristol. Lockdown has prevented us from physically gathering to pray, although there have been several calls to pray online.

Nevertheless we can continue to pray individually just as the prophet long ago called out "the Lord requires that we act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him".

Please continue to give thanks to Him for all that is making Bristol a city of hope. For all that is happening bringing communities together standing shoulder to shoulder with our African American brothers and sisters. Pray that Bristol will arise as a beacon in times of great uncertainty to bring justice where there have been inequalities.

If you have any special prayer, or feel that the Lord is saying something in particular then do get in touch.

Arise Bristol: AriseBristol@gmx.co.uk

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