

Gospel reflections

[Matthew 10:24-39](#)

“Racism is not getting worse, it’s getting filmed,” said Will Smith in August 2016.

Who could have imagined how true these prophetic words would become? Things are not worse; they are getting uncovered and the truth is almost unbearable to speak. For far too long, we have denied our racism. What we see in the United States also occurs here in Australia, the country in which we live.

Jesus in Matthew knows that human nature is wont to remain comfortable in our denial so as to avoid exposure. And that we are also quite adept at dodging disclosure, making up excuses for sidestepping the truth. What is getting exposed, of course, is not just racism, but our complicity.

It has had me thinking....

Is speaking out against racism as a sin a choice for us as followers of Jesus, or a mandate?

The passage for the coming Sunday is Matthew 10:24-39 and in verse 26 Jesus says... “For nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.” Before the Gospel was good news—good news for the poor in spirit, good news for the marginalised, good news for those overlooked, beaten down, good news for the vulnerable and the discriminated, good news for those who mourn, for the meek, for those persecuted for standing up for righteousness and justice—it was and is very bad news for those whose power takes advantage of others; whose power is hellbent on keeping power any way it can—and will threaten with force and charge with death to do so.

Jesus teaches a message of radical inclusivity, mercy and justice and speaks out against the predominant religious messages of exclusion, religious righteousness, and oppression of the underdog, and the sinner.

Ibram X. Kendi argues that the heartbeat of racism is denial; the heartbeat of anti-racism is confession. Being an anti-racist, says Kendi, requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination. Are we willing to engage in this kind of self-examination and confession? I know I have been reflecting on this a great deal. As schools and ECSs we engage children and students in deep learning about identity, history, culture, humanity, justice and as Lutheran schools they also learn about hope, peace, love and service. What an opportunity and responsibility! To do this well requires ‘engaged and caring criticism and self-criticism’ (Christenson 2011). It also requires an ‘education that integrates the acquisition of knowledge with the development of the student as a person’ (Christenson 2011).

Perhaps it is time for all of us to listen and do what Jesus says: “What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.” No wonder three times in this passage we hear Jesus’ injunction, “do not be afraid.” There is a lot of which to be afraid these days, but it is not just the spread of COVID-19. Perhaps it is also our insidious inability, as followers of Jesus, to tell truth to authorities and people that do not fully understand love. Those who follow Jesus, you and me, are called to *be* God’s word in the world, to be who we say we *are* for the sake of the world God loves. The world needs our words and God’s word more than ever.

Do not be afraid.

Adapted from [Karoline Lewis](#)

Prayer:

Good and gracious God,
Who loves and delights in all people, we stand in awe before You,
knowing that the spark of life within each person on earth is the spark of your divine life.
Differences among cultures and ethnic groups are multicoloured manifestations of your light.

May our hearts and minds be open to celebrate similarities and differences among our sisters and brothers.

May all peoples live in peace.

Amen.

Resources

Who are the groups in your community that experience racism?

[Do you sometimes show prejudice?](#)

[LCA Reconciliation Action plan](#)

[Lutheran world federation public statement](#)

[Australians together](#)

[Artists against racism](#)

[National council of churches](#)

[The blessing Zimbabwe](#) or [The blessing Malaysia](#) or [the Arab world blessing](#)

[Calls for the church to speak against racism](#) applicable to our context