

June 21, 2020 Sermon Follow-up

Guest Speaker: Pastor Ed Haywood – “Having the Eyes and Ears of Jesus”

Some Pastoral Comments

In our current national environment, I'm overwhelmed by humanity's need for the Kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven. We see political polarization, the devastating effects of a global pandemic along with its ensuing economic repercussions, and recent events that have highlighted racial unrest and injustices past and present. In the midst of this turmoil, I'm asking God to let me see and hear Scripture with fresh eyes and ears, especially when it comes to the Bible's repeated declarations of God's concern for "the least, the lost, the last, and the lame" that Pastor Ed Haywood mentioned in his sermon.

I am so thankful for Pastor Haywood's humble posture in saying some things he undoubtedly knew would be hard for some of his white brothers and sisters to receive. I want to remind myself and our congregation that the criteria of good sermon content is not "Did I like it?" but "Did it speak truth from God's word while pointing to Jesus and His gospel?" I appreciate Ed's faithfulness in speaking the truth in love. I hope we will be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 who "received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."

In these emotionally charged times we need to have some difficult conversations we might prefer to avoid. Yet, in God's kindness the Spirit may use those conversations to help us see things we must repent of if we are going to be conformed more to the likeness of Jesus. I know my natural tendency can be to deflect, defend, and justify my own righteousness. When I allow that to happen, I miss out on the conviction, repentance, and transformation that comes from recognizing my need for Jesus to justify me by His righteousness.

As you have conversations about race relations, I encourage you to review the second session from "The Nature of the Chapel" series from last year. Here are the [presentations](#) here are the [slides](#). Here are a few postures we can adapt to help us talk with others who disagree with our positions:

- A posture of prayer
- A posture of humility
- A posture of listening
- A posture of gentleness
- A posture of esteem
- A posture of edification (building one another up)

I pray we will "let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom" (Col 3:16).

Dale South — Small Groups Pastor

Sermon Recap

The Gospel of Luke introduces Jesus' public ministry in His home town of Nazareth (Luke 4) where Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the fulfillment of prophecies recorded 600 years earlier in Isaiah 61. Jesus' initial outing began well but ended with the people trying to throw Jesus over a cliff (Luke 4:29). They went from approval to anger after Jesus references the prophets Elijah and Elisha bypassing the Jews in order to minister to Gentiles. Jesus was telling His fellow Jews,

"Gentiles matter." The response of rage toward Jesus was essentially rooted in racism. Jesus was willing to risk controversy, division, and rejection because it was important that His fellow Jews hear from Him that Gentiles matter to God and to the Messiah just like the Jews mattered to God and the Messiah.

Isaiah 11:3–4 also spoke of the coming Messiah prophesying, "And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth." Jesus was seeing with spiritual eyes and hearing with spiritual ears in "the fear of the LORD" to hear the voice of God. We cannot judge based on what we hear in the media, how we feel, or what our family or society is saying. Judgment must come from the word of God in what spiritual eyes and ears are hearing. To have such spiritual eyes and ears of Jesus, we must be praying to hear God's voice and we must be repenting when He shows and tells us of our sin.

Just as Jesus held up examples from the ministries of Elijah and Elisha in Luke 4, Jesus pointed to a Samaritan man in Luke 10, a Samaritan woman in John 4, and a Gentile demon-possessed man in Mark 5 to show that Gentiles matter to God. These different ethnic groups had mutual prejudices against one another. In the story of the Good Samaritan, the man had to break stride from what he was doing and where he was going in order to help the man lying on the road. God superintended the recording of each of these events in the Bible as a direct confrontation of any thought the Jewish people (or any other people) might have about being racially or ethnically superior.

We all have racial biases that we need to confess and repent of. To overcome those biases and to put the Kingdom of God on display, we need to show hospitality to those different from us, not just to those who will invite us in return and repay us. In Luke 14, Jesus told a parable about a feast in the Kingdom of God. People of means and privilege were invited but made excuses to not attend. Then the Master invited the poor, the blind, and the lame in place of the original invitees.

Throughout the Bible, God reveals Himself as the God who takes a special interest in defending the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow. Jesus embodies God's special concern for the lost, the least, the last, and the lame. When we love people different from ourselves, they may be impacted for the Kingdom as they see Jesus through us.

Discussion and Application Questions

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the sermon?
2. Was there anything that made you uncomfortable in the sermon? ... Anything at which you found yourself feeling defensive? ... Do you know what was at the root of your reaction?
3. Pastor Haywood asserted, "We all come with our prejudices and racial biases. We all come with spiritual glaucoma that causes us not to see what really needs to be seen." How can we see and get beyond our blind spots and biases?
4. Who are you inviting to your table?
5. Are you able to separate the statement, "black lives matter" from the "Black Lives Matter" organization? In several passages noted in the sermon, Jesus made it a point to let the Jewish people know that Gentiles mattered to God and to Him, even when He knew it would be controversial. Can you wholeheartedly say, "Black lives matter to God and they matter to me?"
6. Would you pray for God to show you a next step of obedience in representing Jesus and His Kingdom?