

Prayer of the Week:

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, The Second Sunday of Christmas)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Austin Channing Brown

January 3rd

Intro

Today, let's learn about the life and work of Austin Channing Brown. Austin is a Christian black woman who fights for racial justice through activism and education.

Racism is prejudice against a person or group on the basis of their ethnic or racial identity.

You could also say it this way: Racism is the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another. (Source: Webster Dictionary)

What does the Bible say about racism?

The Bible & Racism

There isn't a verse that explicitly says you shouldn't be racist. There is a thread of truth that runs through the scriptures that condemns the principle of racism.

It begins in *Genesis 1:27*, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

This shows us that all of humanity is stamped with the image of God and therefore has infinite worth. Racism is when we devalue a person based on the color of their skin and fail to see their worth. When we do this, it is sin.

Galatians 3:28 says, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

The Bible declares that Jesus is the world's Messiah. Christ is ruler over all the nations and the kingdom of Christ has no national boundaries.

This reality is portrayed in *Revelation 7:9-10*, "I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb..."

Based on this biblical evidence, there is no room for racism in the life of the Christian. And virtually all Christians agree on this point. But, white Christians have typically had two responses:

1. Create a narrative that racism is a thing of the past. After all, slaves were freed more than 150 years ago, the civil rights movement in American ended 60 years ago and we've even had a black president. So, racism is a thing of the past and any cries of racism are just victim mentality.
2. Do your best to be nice to people of color, so that you can rest quietly knowing you are not racist. As long as you are not racist then the whole thing can be pretty much ignored.

There is a third way: Don't ignore racism or pretend it isn't real. Instead, choose to listen carefully to the experience of black people (and other minorities) in America and hear their stories.

Austin's Story

Austin asked her parents why they gave her a boys name. Austin was her grandmother's maiden name, but there was more to the story:

"We knew that anyone who saw [your name] before meeting you would assume you are a white man. One day you will have to apply for jobs. We just wanted to make sure you could make it to the interview."

Austin's experience at a typical day of work:

- Asked if she needs directions to her office.
- Co-worker asks to touch her hair.
- Work conversation turns into conversation about urban violence.
- Mistaken for another black woman in a different department.

With these stories the two options are again opened up to us: Do we discount them based on the narrative that racism is a thing of the past and say Austin is playing the victim? Do we think to ourselves, "I would never do those things."

OR, do we choose to listen to the experience of a person who inhabits this world differently than we do. For only when we care and then listen will things change.

As Christians we must know that the scriptures we call Holy show us there is no place for racism in our hearts. Then, we must face the difficult realities surrounding race in our country and seek reconciliation the best we know how.