

04.14.21 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “All are Made in the Image of God”

Scripture Reading: [Genesis 1:27; Galatians 3:26-29](#)

Reflection: Rev. Amy Schenkel

Isaac joined our family in his sophomore year of high school. At the age of 15 he left his home in China, his parents, his grandma, his church family, and his culture to come study in the states. We welcomed Isaac, became his American family, and have walked with him through high school, college, grad school, and now an upcoming wedding!

Once, when our family was going to an amusement park, we paid for the family rate that included 2 parents and their children. All was well until at the turnstile the attendant wondered how he could be part of our family. We were tall, he was shorter. We have blond or brown hair, he has black hair. Our skin was lighter, his was darker. She assumed that our family members would be defined by the way we look on the outside.

Unfortunately, we often carry these assumptions into how we think about the family of God. We imagine that our brothers and sisters in Christ- at least those who are *true* Christians- look like us, talk like us, and share in our cultural experiences. As noted in the sermon on Sunday, 11am on Sunday morning is the country’s most segregated hour. In his book *Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity*, David Swanson says that this “segregation inherent in the Christianity I grew up in is not neutral or merely a reflection of individual choices and preferences... [and this] segregation undermines the witness of the body of Christ.”

Swanson suggests that the church should address this segregation, “not by pursuing racial, ethnic, or cultural diversity but by addressing our discipleship practices.” (59) Discipleship practices help us be more like Jesus and live more like Jesus. Jesus eats with sinners like Zacchaeus, touches the unclean woman, and calls ‘the Samaritan’ good.

Jesus illustrates the reality of Galatians 4:28: in the family of God, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female. What matters is not our skin color, our economic status, or our gender. What defines us as humans is that all persons are made in the image of God and are loved by God.

This truth should also define our judgements about other people. When I see someone who dresses differently than I do, or when I hear someone speak with an accent, what is my first thought? I confess, rarely do I think about the image of God in them. I rarely picture God reaching out to comfort and care for them. But, when I do name their image-of-God-ness, or when I picture them in the palm of God’s hand like I do my own children, then I am humbled, and I am reminded that the family of God is richer and better because of our differences.

Prayer:

Our father, who is in heaven, help us to remember that you are not just *my* father, but the father of all whom you’ve created. Forgive us when we have contributed to divisions in the family of God, knowingly or unknowingly. Give us eyes to see the image of God in others and give us a heart to love as you love. Draw your church back to the ways of Jesus. Amen.

Action Item for the Day/Week:

Look at your social media feed. What percentage of those you follow look like you? A 2013 survey by Public Religion Research Institute found that the social networks of white Americans are 91 percent white and that “fully three-quarters (75 percent) of whites have entirely white social networks without any minority presence.” (Swanson 19). If this is true for you, try to diversify the social media voices in your life, and pray that God will use these voices to expand your ideas about what the family of God looks like. (Although I cannot endorse everything on these feeds, you may want to consider following @praymarchact, @morganharpernichols, @thewitnessbcc, @blackliturgies, @btbyouth, @centerpublicjustice, @lisasharper, @austinchanning, @bethebridge, @jemartisby)

To learn about the discipleship practices that David Swanson suggests will help the church seek solidarity across racial barriers, I encourage you to pick up his book *Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity* at one of these places:

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

[ChristianBook.com](https://www.christianbook.com)

[BarnesandNoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com)

[Audiobooks.com](https://www.audiobooks.com)

Songs for today:

[Image of God](#)