

BECOMING TOGETHER:

Toward The
Beloved
Community

A WALK THROUGH GALATIANS AND ANTI-RACISM



Session 1

BIG FOCUS ON RACE IN RECENT TIMES - TO WHAT END?



Current context has brought to light the systematic way in which people are marginalized, subjugated and oppressed. Recognition of the need to change the structures that cause great harm to certain segments of the population, whereas before many people were in denial that such issues existed. These are good things. Unjust harm should be addressed and dealt with. Deeper question, though, is: to what end? What is the end goal of dismantling unjust systems and structures? What do we want when this happens?

MLK'S VISION OF THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

EARLY ON, HE SAID THIS:

“The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.” (Martin Luther King Jr.)

AGAPE LOVE & JUSTICE



It is a community marked by agape love and justice. It is a community marked by goodwill for one another, where all are accepted and embraced for who they are. It is a community in which no one is discriminated against for who they are, nor one where power is used to advantage one group at the expense of another.

DELVING DEEPER INTO THIS VISION THROUGH ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS



The Christian Vision of The Beloved Community

Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision has roots in his spiritual traditions. What does our faith and our Scriptures have to say about the Beloved Community? Where does this kind of community come from, and who makes it happen? Martin Luther King Jr. had distinctive beliefs about where this could come from. His initial beliefs were that people of goodwill could come together to make this happen through the philosophy of nonviolence.



Toward the end of his life, however, he saw the depths of evil prevalent in society, and he despaired that this sickness could never be healed. He died quite broken by the extent of resistance he saw to the creation of this Beloved Community. I included materials for your viewing and reading. If you didn't see them, that's ok. But if you did, then it should give you some sense of the reality of these issues of race. How intractable they can seem. Where do we even start? We can see today how it was understandable for MLK to grow despondent. Was it correct to lose hope? What does our faith really have to say? St. Paul had his own beliefs and convictions about this. These beliefs and convictions come through in his letter to the Galatians.

PREMISE AND OVERVIEW OF PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE GALATIANS

In his letter to the Galatians, he clearly lays out his convictions that the old age of division has now passed, and now there is a new creation in which we are all one, and that in this new creation stands a new community - the Beloved Community.

PAUL'S VISION IN GALATIANS



GOD AS THE AGENT OF CHANGE



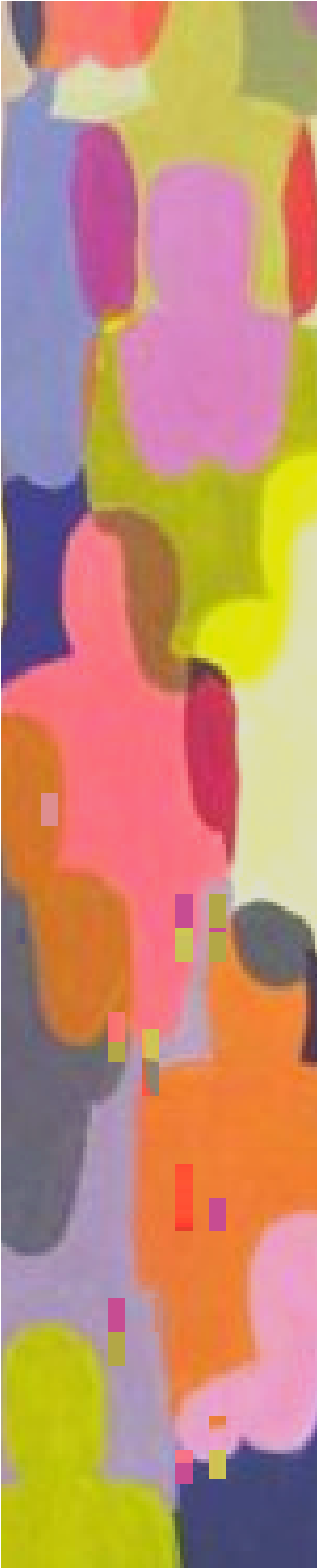
The key difference with Martin Luther King Jr's vision, however, is that this is a new creation and community brought on entirely by God's initiative.



We are transformed by the Spirit who changes us into the new community of the new creation that God has made. Just as God created the world and humanity, God now creates the new world and new humanity.

Many interpreters of Paul believe that he espoused what's been termed the "apocalyptic gospel". The premise of this gospel is that God has invaded our cosmos from without. The death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross is the climax of that invasion.

The old age - the age of the existing cosmos - was one dominated by what Paul calls "the flesh". In this cosmos, the powerful rule, injustice is prevalent, and self-centeredness is the way of life. Within this cosmos, the best of our will and intention is powerless to overcome this way of life. Paul calls this



"the present evil age." (Galatians 1:4)

God invades this cosmos in the person of Jesus Christ. The cosmos resists the invasion and puts him to death. God, however, has the final victory through resurrection. The war is won. The new creation is declared, but battles will continue as the old age resists and continues to fight on despite the end result already being known. Paul believes that we live in this juncture between the old age and new age, between the present evil age and the new creation.

PAUL'S LETTERS ARE RIFE WITH POLARITIES.

Enslavement vs. Freedom

Flesh vs. Spirit

Law vs. Faith

Slave vs. Child

Gospel vs. Non-Gospel

Present evil age vs. New creation

Paul believes that our lives on earth consist of a cosmic battle between these polarities. In our own hearts, in our relationships with others, in our communities, in this world, there is an ongoing battle between these forces until God's final victory will come once and for all.

The life of the new creation brought about by God's invasion is the life in the Spirit. It is a life of mutuality, of love, where the fruit of the Spirit is borne in the life of the new community. In short, life in the Spirit is life in the Beloved Community. This was Paul's vision rooted in the revelation he received from Christ himself. Now that's the overall theology and belief system of Paul. How did this play out in nitty gritty, everyday reality? That is what's going on in his letter to the Galatians.

THE PERVERSION OF THE GOSPEL: WHAT IS THE TRUE GOSPEL?

Paul's letter to the Galatians consists of a lot of anger, frustration and lament. Why is Paul so emotional in this letter? What's going on? We want to delve into this.

Perversion
of the
Gospel



He begins the letter with an emphatic “Amen”:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Galatians 1:3-5).

But then he transitions immediately into curses. He says this:

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and

are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed! (Galatians 1:6-9)

From “Amen” to “Curse”. What is going on here? Paul is accusing the Galatians of deserting God and perverting the gospel. So the question is:

“What was the gospel for the Galatians?”
and ***“How was it being perverted?”***

To answer these questions, we need to take a brief look at who the Galatians were.

GALATIANS AS A VANQUISHED PEOPLE



This picture encapsulates the image of the Galatians. Galatians were another name for Gauls, or Celts. They had been the arch-nemesis of Rome for several centuries. They were the famous Barbarians. That wild, lawless, untameable people. A people who had struck fear in the Romans. Always on alert for the invasion of these barbaric hordes.

After centuries of campaigns, they were defeated one tribe at a time, until they were finally vanquished and subjugated as a people. Romanized Galatians would use Roman power and methods to attack and subjugate un-Romanized tribes. In this way, the Romans succeeded in using divide and conquer methods.

They were Romanized, civilized and incorporated in many ways into the Roman system. They became vanguards of the Roman military and were called upon to serve as bodyguards for local kings and leaders. But they were still looked upon with suspicion. On the surface they had Romanized, but under the surface, there still lurked lawlessness and that barbaric nature. These fears were sometimes borne out, as seemingly well integrated Galatians would rise up in armed revolt against Rome or its allies, only to be subjugated once again. In case there was any doubt about the Galatians' place in the Roman imagination, images such as the Dying Gaul on the screen were placed in prominent places that commemorated the glory of Rome. Rome's glory was synonymous with the subjugated state of the Gauls/Galatians/Celts.

The only to “resurrect” themselves were to accept the death of their old identities as Gauls/Celts/Galatians, and take on new identities as faithful Roman subjects. These subjects would display their loyalty through offering gifts and worship at the altar of the imperial cult. They would also take arms against fellow tribes that remained rebellious. Even the most Romanized of Galatians - the Galatian aristocracy - were reminded constantly of their inferior heritage and background. It was constantly imperative that they prove their worth and loyalty as Roman subjects.

THE GOSPEL FOR A VANQUISHED PEOPLE

Until Paul came, the official “gospel”, or “good news”, was news from Rome. The Greek word “evangelion” was used to announce military victory by Rome, thus securing the safety of that town. But in pockets of the populace, this Roman good news must have been like a continual salt in the wound of their broken pride. It was more a good news for Romans and those who successfully Romanized, but not for those who couldn’t do so as easily.

But then, Paul came to the Galatians. He came with the gospel. *“message of the gospel came... not in words only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” (1 Thessalonians 1:5)*

The Christ on the cross was someone they could relate to as defeated Galatians. The cross was the symbol of the ultimate consequence of going against Roman might - they knew what this meant. But the good news was that this Christ was victorious over that symbol of unbreakable Roman strength. *“It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified!”* (Galatians 3:1)

And the fact that this victorious Christ loved them, gave his life for them, and now rose with them, was good news for them. *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* (Galatians 2:19-20)

This was a Christ that could relate to. They were redeemed by this loving Christ who died for them. A well-known commentator describes it like this: *“The glad tiding (good news) of this Christ became for them not an object, but rather an occurrence, happening in their midst as though it were a powerful explosion that rearranged the whole of reality (3:1-2). The Spirit of Christ invaded their hearts; they were baptized into this corporate Son of God (ie. the church aka new community);*

and, impelled by the Spirit of Christ, they now cried out to God as their new Father (3:27, 4:6). The glad tiding spoken to them by God himself created them as his new community, and in that New Age community their enthusiasm knew no limit. The love of Christ spawned love of one another, and not least love of Paul, whom they knew to be the messenger God had sent to give the glad tiding (4:14-15).” (J.L. Martyn, “Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.”)

CHALLENGE: A LIMINAL STATE



This new enthusiasm and freedom they found was great. They experienced a taste of this New Age and new creation. But once Paul left them, they still lived in the old world under the domination of real powers. With this

new freedom in Christ, they no longer needed to measure themselves by standards of Romanization that were tiring, nor abide by the image that the Romans had projected regarding them. Roman practices and lifestyles that rubbed against them could be discarded.

But how were they really supposed to live now? They struggled to create, regulate and defend a communal lifestyle that was rooted in their experience of Christ, but there was no precedent or known model. What's more, they were in a potentially dangerous situation.

All subjects of the Roman Empire were expected to participate in civic rites that celebrated the emperor. This was



especially true for Galatian subjects who were still looked upon with suspicion. To shift loyalty from the Roman caesar to a different Lord - Christ, would once again bring up old suspicions of their barbarism and lawlessness.

OPTIONS ARISING FROM THE LIMINAL STATE OF VULNERABILITY

What were they to do? They could go back to their old ways, which it seems some were doing. Or they could find another way to circumvent the real pressures of cozying up to Rome. This is where they come into contact with the Christian Jews.

THE JEWS: HISTORY AND PLACE WITHIN THE ROMAN SCHEMA

The Jewish people had lived through their own, long history. They had been enslaved in

Egypt. They escaped and believed it was through their God. They received the covenant and law at Mt. Sinai through Moses. They lived through the golden era of King



David and Solomon. They experienced bitter division into north and south. The north was annihilated and destroyed forever. The south held on until it too was conquered by Babylon, and had its elite classes deported there. They repopulated their ancestral lands, experienced more domination from the Greeks, and now the Romans.

THE APPEAL OF JEWISH LAW AS SOLUTION TO THEIR LIMINAL STATE

Becoming a full Jew would allow them to enter an accepted space - provides exemption from

participation in Roman rites and is conferred legitimacy. The Romans rather respected ancient faiths, and the Jewish God was that. The fact that they had similar experiences the Galatians could relate to, made entry into this group somewhat appealing. The news that they too could enter and be a part of this covenant group drew these followers. This would happen if they followed the Jewish law.





RESULT: FROM FREEDOM BACK TO ENSLAVEMENT

For Paul, this move was counter to the new creation and life in Christ. In Christ, there was freedom from any conditions. All that was required was faith in this new good news. They were now giving their allegiance away from freedom in Christ through the cross, to the law. They were not finding a new identity as people who were free in Christ, but attaching themselves to conditions set down by the old age - not the new age they were now living in. Creating a condition for their freedom was yet another form of slavery. Allegiance not to law of love, but to love of conditions for acceptance.



FROM FREEDOM
BACK TO ENSLAVEMENT

OUR CURRENT CONTEXT: THE CONQUEST OF WHITE SUPREMACY

The history of the modern world in a nutshell goes like this: Europeans developed new systems of thought during the Enlightenment. They used new knowledge to advance technologies, particularly in the areas of warfare. They used their technologies to begin searching abroad for more sources of riches. They found other lands that could contribute to their wealth. The only issue was, there were people already inhabiting the lands they discovered. As numbers of Europeans in these lands increased, there was less room for co-existence.

The other thing that developed was a trade in human beings from Africa. People were captured and sent to these new lands to provide labour for these European settlers. The European settlers came from Christian civilizations. There were tensions between content in their Bible and what they were doing to indigenous people and African slaves. They had to find a way to justify their actions.



This was the onset of white supremacist ideology. They found theological and biblical justifications for their actions. Those founding justifications became the basis of a belief in the inherent superiority of themselves as people of a superior civilization, and therefore with the mission and sanction of what they were doing.

The fundamental prerequisite for entry into this privileged new world was to be white. Only they could be blessed with this world of opportunity. Anyone who met this fundamental criterion could, with appropriate effort, wit and ability, benefit greatly within this system. It was excluded to anyone not white. Those who deviated from the norms established by this system were violently repressed. There is a whole history behind this.

FROM WHITE SUPREMACY TO WHITE NORMATIVITY

Into the 1960's, thinking started to change. The Civil Rights Movement changed people's hearts and minds. Overt discrimination against those who are not white was wrong. Believing whiteness was superior was wrong. In Canada, the thinking shifted as well. Economic needs changed too, and a larger labour pool was required. All of these factors led to greater numbers of people coming, and the source countries expanded as well.

Equal rights became enshrined in laws, culminating in Canada with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. ***Equality under the law, however, did not necessarily translate into equality in practice.*** White supremacy, I would argue, converted into what I call white normativity. What I mean by this is that in our systems and structures, in our institutions, norms of thinking and behaviour remained rooted in the traditional white ways of thinking.

Diversity of complexions was welcome, but standards and norms of thinking and behaviour, I would argue, remained unalterably white. The cultures for these institutions are set by those at the top, which remained and still remain overwhelmingly white. I felt this myself in the various settings I encountered: working for a big, multinational company, working in a law firm setting.

There is a deep resistance to white normativity. Case example: people who have foreign sounding names don't get interviewed.

For those who are not white, the ones who can gain meaningful entry into the system of white normativity are precisely those who can meet the norms of that normativity. That is what distinguishes model minorities from suspect minorities.



INTO THE MIX: KOREANS IMMIGRANTS AS THE MODEL MINORITY

Korea has had its own share of tragic and difficult history. It is a history of continual influence, dominance and subjugation from more powerful countries. The last hundred years were a particularly difficult time in the country's history. What shone through is a will to survive, and a resolve to survive in the world as it is. With that will and resolve, Koreans found themselves in Canada.

Koreans, influenced by Confucian thinking, looked upon the United States and the Western world as a big brother of sorts, as benevolent liberators and countries to emulate. With that thinking, Koreans also adopted the mindset of white normativity, including its views toward the “suspect minorities”.



DISPARITY BETWEEN MODEL MINORITIES AND SUSPECT MINORITIES

Model minorities blend in well to the white normative system: they put their heads down, work hard, are amenable, competent, understand the system and function well within it. They don't rock the boat. They don't speak out too critically against it. Because of their loyalty to the system, they are rewarded with their own place in that system. It's not at the upper levels of it, nor powerful enough to influence the direction of these systems, but it's good enough to eat, have abundance and prosper.

Suspect minorities, on the other hand, are viewed suspiciously. They are seen as capital "O" Other. Images in the media will perpetuate these suspicions and arouse fears. They are the antithesis of white normativity. They are the Galatians of today. They are seen as not doing what's required to fit into the system. They are criticized.

Model minorities develop views aligned with the majority: if they only study harder, raise their kids better, behave more politely,

stop committing crimes, etc. then they would do better. Model minorities (and of course the white majority) do not readily see how policies and attitudes are systemically aligned against them.



KOREANS AS MODEL MINORITY: IS THAT A BAD THING?

This is a valid question. Koreans have generally fared well. Many of us are materially blessed. Is there anything wrong with that?

I would posit that there has been a cost of prioritizing survival within system of white normativity. It's akin to Jesus' saying: *"For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."* (Matthew 16:25)

What sort of cost have we borne out? Running away from our Koreanness and who we are - adopting white mindset, mentality, behaviours, attitudes. In this way, losing what is distinctively great about the Korean personality and culture. Eg. “jeong”. We can adapt and fit in with white normativity, but it’s like putting on another cloak - it can be tiring.

WEB DU BOIS SAID THIS IN HIS BOOK, *THE SOULS OF COLORED FOLK*:

“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, — a world which yields him no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the

American Negro is the history of this strife, — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost.” (W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Colored Folk)

To survive in this system, there is like a double self. The workplace, professional self, and the real inner self. This is why 2nd gen Koreans still have spaces like church, circles of friends, Korean professional networks, etc. To find a space where they can merge this double self into a better and truer self. Living as this double self can be tiring.

The other cost is this: we have almost willingly enslaved ourselves to reality as it is. We are stuck in the old world, focused solely on



survival within it. We've accepted our lack of power to do anything about it or to change it, and we fear losing the gains we've made if we stick our necks out.

Finally, there is a lack of ownership in this society. Because our society is merely a place where we had to survive in, it

became only about my survival, what I could get from this system, and how I could carve my own space within it. It is never “our” society, but rather someone else’s that I have to live in. This lack of ownership results in a sense of alienation from the society we live in. We are grateful for the blessings we can enjoy, but do we feel that this is our society? That it belongs in a sense to me? That it is mine to shape and be a part of shaping?

We have learned to stay in our own private domains. We enjoy what the system gives us, but we don’t engage beyond that. I would argue that we are still trapped - enslaved, to use St. Paul’s wording - by our alienation from this society. It’s why we see the movements for justice going on, but we don’t necessarily feel that it’s our issue. We see many white people marching in the protests, because they feel like they have a stake in what happens. Whether from complicity in white privilege, guilt or compassion, they are more engaged with what happens around them, because they know that it is their society. They feel like they have a place and stake in shaping society. Koreans and other Asians are generally more wrapped up in their own worlds - their own survival so to speak - to be really engaged. This is alienated existence.

This alienated existence extends to our children as well. They grew up here, speak the language, have not experienced much overt racism, and have all the abundance that society provides, yet there is still a sense that what happens out there doesn't really involve them. They have a hard time finding a purpose in life and a sense of calling, because of this continual alienated existence.

I would say that we are still not free in many senses. We are still trapped and living in the old age that Christ came to free us from. Our hearts are still not set free from survival mode and enjoying our safe space within the white normative system. We do not feel like we are part of a new creation in which we seek and find true solidarity with others who are suffering or facing hardship within the system we live in. So there are questions that we will explore together over the next few weeks.



QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN

What is true freedom? What is new creation? What is the gospel for us, and what is perversion of this gospel? What are the implications of this message for us?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Share your own experiences: have you lived a life of double self? Has survival within the white normative system been your main focus? Has this resulted in a sense of alienation from this society? How has your own experience been like being a racial minority, but perhaps part of this model minority group?