

## Notes for 1/14/24 Sermon: “Doesn’t Christianity Crush Diversity?”

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Revelations 7: 9

**Is Christianity a white man’s religion?** Historically, the Christian church didn’t hit southern Europe until \_\_\_\_\_. Expanded to \_\_\_\_\_ parts of the world, and currently, the most missionaries sent into certain parts of the world that have been unreached are from countries within Africa, India, and countries in Asia.

**Does Christianity crush diversity?** An interesting choice of words, you see the word crush is an **contranym**. **A contranym** is a word with opposing definitions. Two opposing ideas being right at the same time. So the word crush, is a word that can mean victory, overcoming a great obstacle, or triumph. It can also mean; a shattering, irreparable destruction, or utter failure.

**Does Christianity CRUSH diversity? Yes.**

As one of the top three monotheistic religions in the world, regarding quantity of devout followers *globally*, the Christian church (big C for Universal church) certainly is diverse in numbers but the little c church in North America, not so much.

For years there was a saying by **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** concerning whether or not the North American church is diverse. “[**Sunday morning** is the most segregated time of the week in the USA.”

Diversity without unity is not the kind of diversity that tells the world of the savior we claim nor the Kingdom we come from. Revisit Revelation 7:9, how do you read it?

How does the little church in North America join up with the big C church of the global church of God, Jewish and non-Jewish alike? What if the way out of the potholes of the xenophobia, racism and sexism of North American little c churches is just to foster or attend multi-ethnic churches?

An **article in Christianity Today** addresses the promise of multi-ethnic churches in North America;

“A [recent study](#) reveals that in 2019, multiracial churches made up about 16 percent of all congregations in the US, compared to 6 percent in 1998. While Catholics have consistently had the largest percentage of multiracial churches—17 percent in 1998 and 23 percent in 2019—evangelical churches showed the greatest increase, moving from 7 percent in 1998 to 22 percent in 2019.” -

This article in Christianity Today goes on to say;

“Multiracial congregations have gained a greater share of American churches over the past 20 years, but as my colleagues and I have found, **they are not delivering on what they promised.** Multiracial churches often celebrate being diverse for diversity’s sake. They aren’t challenging racial attitudes that reinforce systemic inequality. Rather, they either attract Blacks and Latinos who already had attitudes that reinforced inequality, or Blacks and Latinos over time begin to adopt whites’ typical individualistic ideas about race in America.

Additionally, studies show that people of color in multiracial churches are often relegated to roles that are more symbolic, ones that people see (like usher or singer) but that have no real

influence or authority in the church. This can even occur when racially homogenous churches merge to become a racially diverse church. Over time, whites end up occupying the roles in the church with the most authority. Racial diversity without power equality is not good news for anyone, especially not for people of color.” - [Christianity Today article](#)

Same can be said from our brothers and sisters in Christ from the lgbtq community who love the Lord with all their heart soul, mind and strength.

Our unity is not in our multi-ethnic congregations but in Jesus Christ who binds us all as the ingrafted branches that we are, without Christ breaking down the power barrier between the different ppl His blood brings together, we are just assembling different groups to assimilate, colonize and subjugate one another under a steeple as much as under society's boot. Tower of Babel collectives.

**Without addressing the power dynamics** that live in, what [Bryan Stevenson](#) calls, the *narratives of racial difference*. What is that you may ask? [“The narrative of racial difference - the false belief that black people are inherently inferior - has continued to haunt the United States. This false narrative of racial difference was created to justify slavery and has survived beyond slavery's formal abolition, turning into decades of racial terror and segregation.”](#) **For inequality is what makes superiority meaningful.**

These [narratives of racial difference](#) buttress racism inside and outside of the Church how are is our blood-bought diversity to be a testament to a broken world, like it was in the book of ACts. Narratives of racial difference keep the little c church in America from rubble of those walls of separation the blood of Christ crushes us. The walls held up by society, without living into the crushed power dynamics that function like rhubarb in the concrete of those walls, we will

be crushed in our endeavor, and crushed along with it. Without addressing power, we live into the form of diversity, of Revelations 7:9 without the function of its power.

MultiEthnic churches are not without problems, oftentimes because they commit to look like the REvelations 7:9 church in form but not in function. Power belongs to God the father, not any sub group over another. Let's look at two stories where this sense of power was faced by the multi-ethnic first attempts of the early church. We'll look at this in **two forms' of power** we see in scripture that had to be torn down in order for this whole obedience thing to work; social power as well as power over resources, let's see if you can tell which is which;

1. This happened in the early church, turn in your bibles to [Acts 6:1-6](#) if you will.
2. Turn in your bible to Galatians 2:11-16 or 21

Which is which?

You see, it is not the we need to be perfect, as much as honest about the walls of separation we have yet to unlearn, we all come into the church conditioned by society and it's walls, since society will be burned away when Christ returns, to not let the word of our testimonies be burned up along with it we must not only learn about God's multi-ethnic glorious image of how all things will be in Revelations 7: 9, we must also **unlearn** in order to truly get it. To live it, to embody it -together.

This dance of learning and unlearning is essential to obedience. From the Jewish & Greek widows, to two Apostles to us now, this dance has been an ongoing challenge to faithfully live into. This faithfulness, or obedience if you will, is not just about where we place our bodies on SUn-day morning, despite Dr. MLK's charge, but what we confess and repent of within them.

When has this ever worked??? You may ask. I don't have an answer as much as a word and some precedents worth naming;

**Perichoresis - [circumcession](#) or mutual indwelling is this idea of being within one another without compromising your own integrity and distinction. Its the root word from which we get choreography.**

1. The Holy Trinity, God three in one.
2. A marriage between man and wife over many years of ups and downs but love throughout and in between can lead to a type of perichoresis in that they each are their own partner in the union, yet intertwined and influenced by the other. As a mirror to the Trinity, a husband wife and the Spirit of GOD make a triune union, does it not?
  - a. [Physical intimacy](#), preferably in holy matrimony, yet physical intimacy all the same.
3. Dancing.

**As a salsa instructor**, I use the Latin Ballroom as a means to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. When I teach students there are those who are a blank canvas and those who have some expertise or experience in another dance form. Guess who is my favorite to teach? The former. The toughest to teach? Often the latter.

The former I can get straight to learning/instruction. The other I have to first break them of what they think they know and until they unlearn that, then their psychological and somatic absorption rate for comprehension and adaptation is greatly impeded and slowed.

You see, to join God's global church, to join Revelations 7:9 we must not only read the word, but embody it. Not alone, not cognitively or intellectually understand but with and within our very bodies in community. That demands learning and unlearning.

There are things in your & my body, walls of separation yet to be crushed that you won't even know are there until a young suitor from the ethnicity your grandma warned you about asked to take out your teenage child on a date? There are things in your body that you won't know are there until you walk into a room of bodies you were taught to be afraid of, or to survive amongst.

Our obedience is not so much in the percentage of demographics within the room, as much as in the percentage of our bodies' **automatic physiological responses** to other bodies. Automatic physiological constrictions or bracing or old contempts taught to us by our ancestors and elders that we can regularly and rhythmically submit and confess to the Father and repent!

You and I continually must rely on the blood of Christ and the goodness of God to remediate our hearts, from the root to the fruit, the walls of separation we have been so inundated by in this land we call North America, blinded by its dreams of diversity, it never has fully awakened to the horrors of its racial harms to Native American, African American, Central American, Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Latino, Indian bodies, and even the more aversive to gaze upon the bodies of Palestinian, Uyghur, Roma, Congolese, South African, poor Appalachian and Urban bodies, so much that many wander between the half awake and half asleep land we call home, but the Church of God is not called to such selective slumber. WE are called to a vision that we participate in knowing that God will bring us into His Glory.

If we cannot participate in the global church's obedience, **how can we in North**

**America ever claim before God that we truly loved our neighbor as we**

**love ourselves.** And if we cannot claim that, can we honestly say to the Father that we loved Him with all of our heart soul mind and strength. For if we cannot and will not love our neighbor enough to purge ourselves of power, how can we ever say we loved Him.

A word to the church **as we enter a political season**, a season that is more about survival, than democracy for its citizens. I don't know if Christianity in North America will continue to join the global church of God when we so easily slip into the sin of Peter in Galatians 2. You see, Peter was a victim of cowardice and was moved by polarity, rather than steadied by the complexity of the gospel for both Jews & Gentiles. What I mean is this, as Christians we are not called to polarity, but complexity. **Complexity is where diversity lives, where community within diversity lives.** We are not a witness to the world and do not live into the manifold witness of Ephesians 3 that Pastor Chris mentioned when, as soon as a land asks us to pick a side we so quickly forget that we do not belong here, that we are of another kingdom, an eternal one. We are more than independents, republicans and democrats, you are saint! Washed by the blood of the Lamb, such a high price that how can we ever bend the knee or contort our brow at the idols of elephants and donkeys. Christianity crushes diversity when the community of the saints confounds the lines that divide us in this land. Are we not more easily manipulated when we are polarized?! Let us know throw off the tug and deception of Peter's sin, and live into Paul's charge to him and remember that we were bought with a price, and our political beliefs submit to the Word of God before any pundit or candidate. Ultimately this is not our home amen?!

Beloved, let us confess & repent and pray that all of the church of Pittsburgh will join us so that we may enjoy the foretaste of Revelations 7:9 NOW!!!! And all the more THEN! To dance with

the heart of God amongst the people, to such joyous treble that the neighborhoods of Pittsburgh are thirsty for the Living water at the very sound, sight and clamor of our praise and dancing.

Revelations 7:9 (all white robes, while still keeping our distinctiveness.) **That's not assimilation, that's perichoresis of the highest order;**

*9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:*

*“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.”*

*11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying:*

***“Amen!**  
Praise and glory  
and wisdom and thanks and honor  
and power and strength  
be to our God for ever and ever.  
Amen!”*

Don't idolize diversity for diversity's sake, but for Christ's sake! Diversity is a byproduct as much as racism, sexism and xenophobia, transphobia, homophobia are a means to an end. It's not about diversity, that's the **byproduct of sharing the same object of our faith**



**and hope** fully manifest, together, not uniform, but united in the angelic chorus of AWE

GLORY & Honor of the Most High God who was and is and is to come!!!

Does Christianity crush Diversity? **The Church of God does**, ~~cuz that's what we are,~~  
~~from everywhere in time and space.~~ Will the church of Pittsburgh join in both form and  
function? I don't have that answer, but we can beseech the God and Father of our Lord Jesus  
Christ to allow the HS to move upon us til we do so, amen?

Thanks be to God!!!!