

## **Racism – Our Dark Secret**

*Rise & Shine, May 31<sup>st</sup>*

### **James 2:1-4**

*My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?*

### **Questions:**

1. When have you noticed issues of prejudice in yourself or others whom you wouldn't have expected?
  2. Have you ever felt threatened by a person or situation, only to realize later that your assumptions were wrong and that no danger existed?
  3. When have you been wrong in your assumptions about people? When have people been wrong in their assumptions about you?
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*In the News*

## **Racism is Not Just a Conservative Problem**

On Monday around 8am, a white woman named Amy Cooper was walking her dog unleashed in The Ramble, a protected wooded area of New York City's Central Park. Dogs must be leashed in Central Park from 9am to 9pm, but in the Ramble they must always be leashed.

Christian Cooper (no relation), a Black man and a bird-watcher, asked Amy to leash her dog. Christian later said that he had been worried about the delicate ecosystem of The Ramble and the way in which the dog might affect the birds. Amy, clearly offended, responded by saying that she was going to call the police on him. A video of the confrontation went viral, sparking outrage on social media.

In the video that Christian recorded, Amy can be heard saying, "I'm taking a picture and calling the cops. I'm going to tell them there's an African American

man threatening my life." Amy repeatedly and insistently stresses the term "African American," giving viewers the impression that his race is significant here, perhaps in terms of how he can expect to be treated by the police.

Incidents of police brutality against Black people are not rare. This is borne out by the recent news regarding George Floyd, a black man in that died Monday after bystander video showed a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on his neck as Floyd — handcuffed — pleads, "Please, please, please, I can't breathe. Please, man," before falling unconscious. He died at the hospital a few hours later. Other cases include Ahmaud Arbery, gunned down by vigilantes while jogging; or Atatiana Jefferson, shot and killed by police through the back window of her home; or Botham Jean, shot and killed on his couch by an off-duty officer who walked into Jean's apartment.

White violence is not the sole domain of conservatives, Trump supporters, or open white supremacists. White violence is pervasive, spreading everywhere and tainting everything. From the events that transpired, many began asserting that Amy Cooper was a Trump supporter and a member of the "MAGA" movement. However, campaign contribution information — with donations to Democrats such as Barack Obama, Pete Buttigieg, and John Kerry — leaked online appear to suggest that Amy identifies as a liberal. If true, this matters, because in this political era, during this most critical US presidential election, it is necessary that we understand and recognize that white violence transcends party lines and political ideology.

Many believe that if Donald Trump fails to maintain the presidency and is replaced with a white liberal or a white moderate, racialized violence will abate in this country. But that's not necessarily the case. "Moderate" and "liberal" politicians have all aided in such violence becoming the norm as well.

Martin Luther King Jr. himself warned of the particular danger of this type of racism. "Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection," he wrote in his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." And that lukewarm acceptance can quickly turn into threats or actual violence, when white people feel that their supremacy and their spaces are being threatened. Former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg may well be a Democrat and a self-identified liberal, for instance, but his handling of the killing of Eric Logan by police traumatized the Black community.

Amy Cooper offered an apology during an interview with NBC on Monday night: "And you know, words are just words and I can't undo what I did. But I sincerely and humbly apologize to everyone." Assuming that Amy Cooper is a white conservative Trump supporter desensitizes us to the ways in which even "progressive" white people protect their spaces from Black people. We cannot assume that a liberal or even a progressive political future will save Black people from white fragility and white supremacy and white violence.

In a city and a state that skews heavily liberal, there's a good chance Amy Cooper is the ideal liberal on paper. She also threatened to call the police and falsely report "an African American man" was "threatening her life" in a country well-known for allowing fatal police brutality against unarmed, innocent Black people.

"I am well aware of the pain that misassumptions and insensitive statements about race cause and would never have imagined that I would be involved in the type of incident that occurred with Chris," Amy Cooper said.

For his part Christian Cooper believes "Too much focus has been put on [Amy Cooper] when it really is about the underlying issues that have plagued this city and this country for centuries. Racial issues."

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**Proverbs 18:2**

*A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,  
but only in expressing personal opinion.*

**John 7:24**

*Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.*

**Romans 8:34**

*Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.*

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**Collect for Monday in Holy Week (ANZPB p. 582)**

Jesus the anointed,  
teach us to honor those who need our help,  
and we shall give without condescension,  
and receive with humility.

Hear this prayer for your love's sake.

***Amen.***