

We Can't See What We Can't See – Until We Can't Unsee It

Morgan Murray

West Valley Presbyterian Church

Talking Points:

For many white Christians, the last two months of protests have left us asking, “Where did all this anger and frustration about racism come from?” If we have left the house each morning to live our lives without ever thinking about the color of our skin, we struggle to understand that we live in a position of privilege. For us, it's just normal.

Just because something is normal, that doesn't make it healthy. Many of us have grown up in families, churches, and communities in which racism was normal. Because of that, we can't see what we have never seen. At least we can't see it without help. But in God's severe mercy, the mirror is being held up to us.

Matthew 6:22-25 NKJV

22 “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good [that is, clear or healthy], your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad [that is, evil or unhealthy], your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

As I think about my own family of origin, two diseases have been passed down from generation to generation: Alcoholism and Racism.

When my grandfather died of cirrhosis of the liver, alcoholism was seen as moral failure. So alcoholics and families kept secrets about it, denied it, and would get defensive if anyone suggested there might be a problem. But once it became talked about as a disease, treatment and compassion became the focus.

So when the protests around George Floyd's death came out, I had to say to myself:

I can't see what I can't see, but now that I see it, I can't ignore it.

As I reflected on what is happening and how I should respond, I came to two conclusions:

1. I can't see what I can't see. But now that I do see, I can't ignore it anymore.
2. If I am going to admit that there is a problem, I need to acknowledge my part in that and admit that I am a recovering Racist.

I'm struck by the fact that Jesus closely connects spiritual blindness with idolatry. The tighter the hold an idol has on us, the harder it is for us to see how it is in competition for our allegiance with God.

Talking to my kids about the racism I grew up seeing and practicing has been a real eye-opener. It shows what a different world they are growing up in. And that is a good thing.

Why call Racism a disease?

- We need healing, not judgments and condemnations.
- To me, it feels like God is doing an intervention -which is an act of love.

What would happen if we White Evangelicals could accept that racism is a sin we have passed down to us in our faith tradition, and that God is calling us into Recovery?

I asked you to listen to a interview with Andre Henry, an incredibly talented worship leader, and his experience of systemic racism inside the Evangelical Church. He loves us enough to tell us the truth!

It calls on us to see the addiction, and do what people in AA do: Start doing the 12 steps beginning with admitting that we have a problem

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Having to talk about it with my kids meant I had to put racism into context – for myself and for them. Which led me to identifying myself as a recovering racist. I did this in order to say:

1. I will spend the rest of my life in recovery
2. I will never say, “Racism is no longer an issue for me”
3. I can live in hope that I won’t pass it along to the next generation
4. I must call on God – the Higher Power – for the grace to overcome it. One day at a Time.

Here’s what I hope you will do:

1. Reflect on your own story. Maybe my story reminds you of things in your own family history that need to be contemplated: That is, take a long, loving look at what is true about it.
2. Watch the Phil Vischer video, which draws a straight line between our collective racism and mammon.