

Message Notes
EMBRACING THE STRANGER
Part 1: Strangers by Ethnicity
Acts 6:1-7
September 23/24, 2017
Pastor Mark Riggins

*“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, **I was a stranger and you invited Me in**, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me.’ “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink?’ ³⁸ **When did we see You a stranger and invite You in**, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit You?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the **least of these** brothers and sisters of mine, You did for me.’ “Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, **I was a stranger and you did not invite Me in**, I needed clothes and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after Me.’ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help You?’ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, **whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.**’
– Matthew 25:31-45*

When I imagine God watching my life, I picture Him smiling when He sees me

When I imagine God observing my life, I picture God smiling when He sees me making room for stranger.

1. If I want to embrace Jesus, make room for a stranger.

Who are the strangers in Ventura County?

2. Racism is not a skin problem it is a sin problem.

“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained . . . against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked . . . in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” – Acts 6:1-4

3. If I focus on our differences, it’s easier for me to overlook your needs.

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. – Acts 6:5-6

4. Jesus said, "Make disciples in all nations." If I embrace Jesus, I must embrace people who look differently than me.

Because God is the Creator and Sustainer of everyone, there's no "they," only "us."

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. – Acts 6:7

GLOBAL VILLAGE

Out of 100 people:

61 would be Asian

13 would be African

12 would be European

9 would be Latin American

5 would be American or Canadian

51 would be male; 49 would be female

75 would be non-white; 25 white

67 would be non-Christian; 33 would be Christians

"God is the Creator of the only race that will matter in eternity, the human race." – Tony Evans

How can we take a step toward Christ-honoring unity?

- Personally
- Family
- Church

"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."

– Revelation 7:9a

"We may be of different colors, but we've been washed in the same red blood of the Lamb."

– Tony Evans

Will you ask God to show you examples of when you think "they" instead of "us"? Will you deal with anything He reveals?

Discussion Questions

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1. What stood out to you from the “Strangers by Ethnicity?”
2. Mark talked about the tendency we all have to make a quick observation about a person, throw them into a category and make a judgment. For example, “Those Cowboy fans,” “People who drive those cars”, “People who live in that town”, etc. Can you think of some other examples of when people use this line of thinking to put people into categories?
3. The early Christians who were not from Jerusalem and spoke Greek (Hellenists) complained that their widows were not being taken care presumably because of their cultural differences. Can you think of a modern-day example of needs going unmet because of cultural/ethnic differences?
4. When Christians responded humbly and focused on the needs of the people, we are beautifully united. When have you witnessed Christians united because they were focused on the needs of people?
5. We are all created in God’s image yet we are tempted to put people into categories of “they.” Why do you think that is?
6. Read Revelation 7:9. This weekend we talked about three arenas where we can embrace a stranger by ethnicity: personally, family, and church. How can you take a step toward embracing a stranger by ethnicity?
7. How can our group pray for you this week?