



## Freedom from Racism Sunday

**July 5, 2015**

In response to the tragic shootings in Charleston, New Baptist Covenant, in partnership with the National African American Clergy Network and the African Methodist Episcopal Church calls upon the movement to meditate in Sunday morning worship on the ways that the sin of racism still binds us. Included in this guide are liturgical resources to assist churches in shaping a service of mourning, confession, and action. We will stand together to voice our outrage and recommit ourselves to dismantling racism in our hearts, our churches, and our communities.

# Lectionary Texts (NRSV)

## Proper 9B; 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

### 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

*1 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. 2 For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." 3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. 4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.*

*9 David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward. 10 And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.*

#### Consider:

- The kingdom is divided and David is using the call God gave him to reunite these two parts of the kingdom that have been split. David conquered what some thought he would not be able to conquer. How can we reclaim God's original design for the cities where we live and our nation?

#### Prayer:

Guardian of the weak,  
through the teachings of your prophets  
you have claimed our cities, towns, and homes  
as temples of your presence and citadels of your justice.  
Turn the places we live into strongholds of your grace,  
that the most vulnerable  
as well as the most powerful among us  
may find peace in the security  
that comes in the strong name of Jesus Christ. Amen. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prayer by Vanderbilt Lectionary Library found [here](#).

## Psalm 48

*1 Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, 2 beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King. 3 Within its citadels God has shown himself a sure defense. 4 Then the kings assembled, they came on together. 5 As soon as they saw it, they were astounded; they were in panic, they took to flight; 6 trembling took hold of them there, pains as of a woman in labor, 7 as when an east wind shatters the ships of Tarshish. 8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God, which God establishes forever. Selah 9 We ponder your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. 10 Your name, O God, like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with victory. 11 Let Mount Zion be glad, let the towns of Judah rejoice because of your judgments. 12 Walk about Zion, go all around it, count its towers, 13 consider well its ramparts; go through its citadels, that you may tell the next generation 14 that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will be our guide forever.*

### Consider:

- How do we read this text about God's protection in the aftermath of the Charleston shootings and the recent burning of African American churches?

### Prayer:

Oh people of conscience,  
Cry out.  
Cry out against arrogance.  
Cry out against hatred and anger.  
Cry out against violence and oppression.  
For God requires us to stand  
In the name of justice and freedom,  
For God requires us to oppose terror,  
To muster our power and energy  
Against racist aggression  
And to protect all houses of prayer.

Oh God,  
We implore You,  
Look down upon the suffering  
Perpetrated against churches,  
Against houses of worship in so many lands,  
By the hand of wickedness,  
By the hand of malevolence,  
By the hand of ignorance and sin.  
Today we remember, with sadness, the attacks on  
Mother Emanuel and the Church of the Multiplication  
And the loss of precious life.

With Your gentle and loving hand,  
God of Shelter,  
Unite all of your children  
Under Your canopy of hope and love.  
Bring the light of salvation and healing

To the four corners of the earth. Amen. <sup>2</sup>

## **Ezekiel 2:1-5**

*1 He said to me: O mortal, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. 2 And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. 3 He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. 4 The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD." 5 Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.*

### **Consider:**

- Ezekiel is sent to a “nation of rebels” who have sinned against God. What are the sources of hate-mongering and white supremacy in 21st-century America that defy God’s intention for the beloved community?
- How is the evil of racism perpetuated and passed on to new generations?
- Who are the prophets we have not listened to in our time?

### **Prayer:**

We confess our own complicity in the status quo that perpetuates racism, divides and distorts humanity.

**As we pray, we ask that you will help us discover our true and rightful place within the new humanity created in Christ Jesus. We confess that we have sinned, and that we have fallen short of the glory of God.**

We confess our failures to speak out against injustice. We confess those times when, as individuals and as churches, we have witnessed the fracturing of humanity along ethnic grounds, and yet have remained silent. We confess those times when we have been the powerful ones and have chosen to withhold that power whilst another human suffered.

**We confess the sin of racist exclusion. May those of us who have ourselves experienced exclusion be the first to speak up for others. May we be those who create spaces for reconciliation.**

We pray for our churches. May they become places of reconciliation, where each human soul is valued, and where equality in Christ is a reality in our midst. Forgive us those times where we do not live out our calling as your people. May our churches model the new humanity of Christ to those in the communities where we live.

**We pray for our communities. Where there is division, may we bring restoration. Where there is inequality may we bring justice. Where there is powerlessness may we lift up the broken hearted. Where there is damage may we bring healing.**

Loving and forgiving God, hear our confession, hear the desires of our hearts to be different, grant us your forgiveness, and remake us according to the likeness of Christ. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Prayer by Alden Solovy, Jewish poet, liturgist, and teacher found [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> Prayer by the ministry team of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church in London, UK found [here](#).

## Psalm 123

*1 To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! 2 As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, until he has mercy upon us. 3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. 4 Our soul has had more than its fill of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.*

### Consider:

- This is a corporate confession. Racism binds the soul of the oppressor and the oppressed alike. We all need mercy to free us from its grasp. From each of these perspectives what might it mean to ask, "Have mercy upon us, O Lord?"

### Prayer:

Loving and forgiving God, we come to you today recognizing that in matters of ethnicity we have no choice – we are who we have been made to be. Before you we rejoice at our diversity, and our hearts lift at your great vision of a worshipping multitude gathered from every nation, tribe, people and language. But nonetheless we recognize that our present reality is very far from this ideal.

**We have each been shaped by different forces; some of us have been ground down, whilst others have been built up. Some of us have been worn away, or have become fractured and broken. Some of us have found life a burden rather than a joy. None of us have experienced the perfect life.**

Some of us have inherited power, **whilst others of us have inherited powerlessness.**

Some of us have been born white, in a world where white equates with privilege.

**Others of us have been born black, in a world where black skin carries disadvantage.**

We know that this is not the world as you would have it be, but it is our world, and it has been our experience.

So before you, and in the name of Jesus Christ who loves all people equally, regardless of ethnicity, race, or social status, we come now to recommit ourselves to your vision of the world. We come now to pray 'your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven', and to offer ourselves once again to live out your coming kingdom of equality and justice in our lives, in our churches, and in our communities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Prayer by the ministry team of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church in London, UK found [here](#).

## 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

*2 I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. 3 And I know that such a person--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows-- 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. 5 On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. 6 But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, 7 even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. 8 Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, 9 but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.*

### Consider:

- In this passage Paul writes of his weakness amidst the power of the Roman Empire—a system that was fueled by the oppression of an underclass. What might the gospel message of power in weakness mean in our world today? How does the gospel offer an alternative to the narratives of hate-groups?
- What does the Charleston shooting suggest about violence throughout American culture?

### Prayer:

We stand before you today, oh Lord  
Hearts broken, eyes weeping, heads spinning  
Our brothers and sisters have died  
They gathered and prayed and then were no more  
The prayer soaked walls of the church are spattered with blood  
The enemy at the table turned on them in violence  
While they were turning to you in prayer

**We stand with our sisters**

**We stand with our brothers**

**We stand with their families**

**We stand to bear their burden in Jesus' name**

We cry out to you, oh Lord  
Our hearts breaking, eyes weeping, heads spinning  
The violence in our streets has come into your house  
The hatred in our cities has crept into your sanctuary  
The brokenness in our lives has broken into your temple  
The dividing wall of hostility has crushed our brothers and sisters  
We cry out to you, May your Kingdom come, may it be on earth as it is in heaven

**We cry out for our sisters**

**We cry out for our brothers**

**We cry out for their families**

**We cry out for peace in Jesus' name**

We pray to you today, oh Lord  
Our hearts breaking, eyes weeping, souls stirring  
We pray for our enemies, we pray for those who persecute us  
We pray to the God of all Comfort to comfort our brothers and sisters in their mourning  
We pray that you would bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes  
We pray that you would give them the oil of joy instead of mourning  
We pray that you would give them a garment of praise in place of a spirit of despair

**We pray for our sisters**  
**We pray for our brothers**  
**We pray for their families**  
**We pray for their comfort in Jesus' name**

We declare together, oh Lord  
With hearts breaking, eyes weeping and souls stirring  
We will continue to stand and cry and weep with our brothers and sisters  
We will continue to make a place of peace for even the enemies at our table  
We will continue to open our doors and our hearts to those who enter them  
We will continue to seek to forgive as we have been forgiven  
We will continue to love in Jesus' name because you taught us that love conquers all

**We declare our love for you, our Sisters**  
**We declare our love for you, our Brothers**  
**We declare our love for you, their families**  
**We declare our love as one body, one Lord, one faith, one baptism**  
**We declare they do not grieve alone today<sup>5</sup>**

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<sup>5</sup> Prayer by Rev. Leroy Barber found [here](#).

## Mark 6:1-13

1 He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph, and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." 5 And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6 And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

### Consider:

- *Jesus was not received with open arms in his hometown. Taking action against racism and standing up for equality will not always be welcome in the places we live. Yet still the call is to be prophetic; transformation is not easy. However, when there are defeats, we must learn from them and continue to move forward. What institutional, structural, or relational barriers to reconciliation exist in your city, congregation, community?*
- *When Jesus was not received in his hometown he pulled together his disciples. Here we see Jesus organizing and he sent them out with power. Just as Jesus empowered the disciples, we are empowered. What strategies for specific action against racism might be forged by coalitions new or newly committed to fighting racism?*

### Prayer:

God of grace and powerful weakness,  
at times your prophets were ignored, rejected, belittled, and unwelcome.  
Trusting that we, too, are called to be prophets,  
fill us with your Spirit,  
and support us by your gentle hands,  
that we may persevere in speaking your word  
and living our faith. Amen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Prayer by Vanderbilt Lectionary Library found [here](#).

# Hymns

Amazing Grace

God of Grace and God of Glory

Here I Am Lord

How I Got Over

Nothing But the Blood of Jesus

They Will Know We are Christians By Our Love

# Non–Lectionary Texts to Consider

## **Luke 4:14-19**

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15 He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. 16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

### **Consider:**

*This was Jesus' first sermon. Immediately after the crowd tried to throw Jesus off a cliff. We know we are proclaiming freedom in a hostile context. Being prophetic is not without its challenges and we accept the prophetic stance despite risks.*

## **2 Corinthians 4:7-10**

7 But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.

### **Consider:**

*Mother Emanuel AME continues to proclaim good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the captives. They have been struck down, but not destroyed. The life of Jesus has been made visible in this body of Christ. God gives us the power to overcome the forces of evil that seek to destroy us.*

## **Mark 4:13-20**

13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. 17 But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. 20 And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

### **Consider:**

*Mark 4:13-20 is the passage Reverend Clementa Pinckney and the faithful others of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston were reading together at the prayer meeting on the evening of June 17, 2015. Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old, white male was welcomed into the House of God by a gathering of people who did not share his skin-tone, age, or worldly convictions. Roof waited a full hour*

*before he opened fire. Some of the seeds you plant will flourish, some will fail. How were these seeds of “welcome” lost on this young man? How can we plant the gospel message of love in people’s lives when the soil is fertile and the message will not be rejected?*

## Resources:

### **Prophetic Grief**

By Dr. Otis Moss Jr. and Dr. Otis Moss III

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZU-IWb8-NeQ&sns=fb>

### **Sunday’s coming: Freedom from Racism**

By Dr. Bill Leonard

<https://baptistnews.com/perspectives/sundays-coming-freedom-from-racism/>

### **Eulogy For The Four Young Victims of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church Bombing (Birmingham, AL, 1963)**

By Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

<http://mlkscholars.mit.edu/king-eulogy-1963/>

### **Dylann Roof Was Wrong: The Race War Isn’t Coming: It’s Here**

By Dr. Willie Jennings

<http://religiondispatches.org/dylann-roof-was-wrong-the-race-war-isnt-coming-its-here/>

### **Is the Church the Answer to America’s Racial Divide**

By Sophia A. Nelson

[http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2015/06/is\\_the\\_church\\_the\\_answer\\_to\\_america\\_s\\_racial\\_divide.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2015/06/is_the_church_the_answer_to_america_s_racial_divide.html)

### **The Almost Alternate Ending in Charleston**

By John Ortberg

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2015/june-web-exclusives/almost-alternate-ending-at-emanuel-ame.html?share=wuVERwvg%20Gj63r6Pd0QhuezlwBMvywLR>

### **We Need to Talk About White Culture**

By Joshua DuBois

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/19/we-need-to-talk-about-white-culture.html>

### **Charleston Is Testing the Soul of America**

By Jim Wallis

<https://sojo.net/articles/charleston-testing-soul-america>