

FAITH IN THE WORLD-11

RACISM AND JUDGEMENT

The horrific shooting of two black men by police officers in America last year, sparked off a series of Black Lives Matter events around the world, and two statues of men involved in the hideous crime of slave trading were also pulled down in Bristol and at London docks. They were pulled down in an expression of sheer frustration with many people, who fail to acknowledge that racism continues to exist in our society today.



SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What surprises you in the two accounts?
- What do the two accounts tell us about the existence of racism in our wider society?
- What do the accounts tell us about institutional racism? (within organizations)
- How might the verse from Acts 17 below, speak into the two accounts given?



ACTS 17 v 26

From one human being he created all races of people and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live.

MORE CONTROVERSY OVER ART

In 2016, a sculptor from Oxford, unveiled the very first statue of a black woman in the United Kingdom, commemorating the life of Mary Seacole. She had been a nurse during the Crimean war, and as her services had been refused by the British authorities, she travelled out to the Crimea at her own expense to nurse and save lives.

The sculptor was surprised it had taken 7 years to raise the funds to make it and not the usual 2 years. It was however another statue that caused controversy, as a very vocal group of people appointed themselves to “protect” the name and status of Florence Nightingale, and strongly opposed Mary Seacole’s place in history based on the fact that her parents were Scottish and Jamaican.

Meanwhile, a government minister, Michael Gove, fuelled further doubt about Seacole’s place in history, when he attempted to remove her from the national curriculum, but in the end, he was forced to relent as he faced a petition signed by 35,000 objecting to his plan.



This poem is said to have been written by an anonymous woman in a care home in Dundee, Scotland, and was found only after the author of it died. It is reminder to us to not judge by what we see, but to look beyond and appreciate and love people, as God does.

What do you see, nurses, what do you see?
What are you thinking when you're looking at me?
A crabby old woman, not very wise,
Uncertain of habit, with faraway eyes?
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply
When you say in a loud voice, "I do wish you'd try!"
Who seems not to notice the things that you do,
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe...
Who, resisting or not, lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill...
Is that what you're thinking? Is that what you see?
Then open your eyes, nurse; you're not looking at me.

I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,
As I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of ten ...with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters, who love one another.
A young girl of sixteen, with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet.
A bride soon at twenty — my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep.
At twenty-five now, I have young of my own,
Who need me to guide and a secure happy home.
A woman of thirty, my young now grown fast,
Bound to each other with ties that should last.
At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn.
At fifty once more, babies play round my knee,
Again we know children, my loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead;
I look at the future, I shudder with dread.
For my young are all rearing young of their own,
And I think of the years and the love that I've known.

I'm now an old woman...and nature is cruel;
'Tis jest to make old age look like a fool.
The body, it crumbles, grace and vigour depart,
There is now a stone where I once had a heart.
But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells,
And now and again my battered heart swells.
I remember the joys, I remember the pain,
And I'm loving and living life over again.
I think of the years...all too few, gone too fast,
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, nurses, open and see,
Not a crabby old woman; look closer...see me!



John 7 v 24

24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.



When Samuel went to seek out God's anointed, to become King, the Lord said to Samuel to not look at the person who looked the obvious choice.

"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

1 Samuel 16 v 7

1/ How would you respond if you saw someone being abused or bullied, or you yourself we being bullied/ abused because of your identity, ie because of your age/sexuality/race/religion/ disability/gender?

2/ How can we stand firmly against such judgement and abuse, and challenge the institutional and individual prejudice that people still face today?

The following worship song asks God to "open the eyes of [our] heart." As you listen to it, ask God to open the "eyes" of your heart and the hearts of others, so that we may all see one other through God's eyes, beautifully and wonderfully made, and precious in His sight.

<https://youtu.be/Fm-zb-AH8Xc>