A LUTHERAN RESPONSE TO RACE, CULTURE AND ETHNICITY (RaCE) IN THE CHURCH

SESSION SIX
BIG IDEA #8:
A PERIPHERAL ISSUE AND REVIEW AND OF RaCE OR GRaCE (TIME PERMITTING).
Next Week is the concluding lesson of this series. The lesson and practice will come from Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4.

This will be the culminate objective of the whole series in which we will walk through what the church - God’s people - with her spiritual DNA, look like as one body, as one people and with one culture, that of a culture of Christ.

Before the review, I’ve asked Nigel Brown - who has served as an Elder and Head Elder at Resurrection as well as providing pulpit ministry at Hope Lutheran in Hampton and recently, here in Pastor Hank’s absence, all while attending seminary – to address the doctrine of Elders in the Bible prefaced by some commentary on the nature of Scriptural inspiration which qualifies how we view and receive God’s Word.
Racism – the view and subsequent practice, that not all humans are *quantitatively, equally human. That is to say, some humans are quantitatively superior and others, subsequently inferior. This belief is essentially based on one’s racial and/or ethnic properties.

*quantitative refers to amount.
These four (4) words which, decline in meaning *(and actually ascend with the last)*, should also have distinct and separate consequences with them:

*Racism*
*RaCE bigotry*
*RaCE prejudice*
*RaCE affinity*

The Two Kingdoms Of Divine Regulation For Human Protection, Prosperity And Perpetuity
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THE RIGHT/SPIRITUAL KINGDOM

THE LEFT/CIVIL KINGDOM

F-22 RAPTOR
Acts 17: 24-27a: (From Paul’s sermon at Mars Hill, parenthesis and emphasis, mine)

24 the God who made the world and all things in it… 26 made from one man every nation (ἔθνος - ethnos) of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE RIGHT/SPIRITUAL KINGDOM – THE CHURCH</th>
<th>THE LEFT/CIVIL KINGDOM - GOVERNMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter 2:9</td>
<td>Acts: 17:26</td>
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<td><strong>GRace</strong> - God’s race, culture and ethnicity</td>
<td><strong>Race</strong> - Many races, cultures, and ethnicities</td>
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1 Peter 2: 9 - \(^9\) but you are A CHOSEN RACE (γένος, genos), A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION (ἔθνος, ethnos), A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;
This is our identity and occupation as the church. It is an occupation with all things Christocentric.

The church, the spiritual kingdom, is one nation, the nation of Christ. We are one race, the race of Christ and we are one ethnicity, that of Christ.
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And from this passage Peter tells this one people sharing chosen DNA (genos) and who are or an order of divine royal priesthood forming a holy nation (ethnos), its calling, which is our calling as a church.

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The left kingdom or the civil kingdom, of which is our civil government, is not Christocentric and is not required, by Scripture to be so.

Yes, it is to be informed by Scripture about the duties and responsibilities of the self, to marriage to family and then civil government - but state or civil fellowship and reconciliation are not based on the same reasons or context as the spiritual fellowship of the church, the spiritual kingdom nor has a shared calling.
With respect to the issue of diversity, while we will have different kinds of people in the church, whether it be racial or personality based and so on, the kind of diversity the Bible speaks of is **spiritual diversity**.
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**spiritual diversity**

which is found in the diversity of our spiritual gifts, not our left-kingdom racial, cultural or ethnic diversity or any other kind of human differences.

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**Ex: Spiritual Diversity Based on Spiritual Gifts**

- Teaching didaskalos
- Governing kubernésis
- Giving metadidous
- Mercy eleōn
- Exhorting parakalēn

Christ
Which brings us to our other text, one of the more prominently misused ones, by those who forward a humanist based RaCE doctrine instead of a theologically sound GRaCE doctrine.

Revelation 7:9:

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;
Well-known author Rick Warren, also the Pastor of Saddleback Church, is quoted as stating:
http://pastorrick.com/devotional/english/our-congregations-should-reflect-heaven-s-diversity

“God loves variety. If you don’t believe me, take a look at a national geographic magazine. Look at the variety of people God has made around the world. God doesn’t make clones. There will never – ever – be another you.”

“Since God loves variety, our churches should too. He wants people from all tribes, all nations, and all languages to know him. Heaven will include people from every ethnic group in the world (Revelation 7:9). Our congregations should reflect the diversity of heaven. Jesus says in mark 11:17, “my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.””
As I have said a number of times, being completely wrong is much better than being partially correct.

Warren correctly states that there is only one “you” and that God desires all people to come to know him. Further, we can agree with the observation that God orchestrated the ultimate existence of a variety of people. But…
When Warren states that our congregations should reflect the tribes/nations diversity or RaCE diversity referred to in Rev. 7:9, because God likes variety, he ignores much of the theology of the Bible which we’ve covered with regard to GRaCE instead of RaCE within the church as the protocol of God for the body of Christ.

This is not to say we will not be racially or ethnically diverse because if we share the gospel, as we should being the Ambassadors of reconciliation that we are, we will ultimately win many kinds of people to the Lord.

But what results in our local assemblies is up to Christ. That is to say, it is he, who adds to the assembly through faithful witnessing. It is through deliberate gospel witnessing, not deliberate racial and ethnic trophy hunting, we build God’s church.
But what about the passage? Good question. In responding to the misuse we must observe two (2) interpretively qualifying factors:

1. The context of the passage
2. The ignored property of the passage
Context is the church triumphant. That is, she has been gathered from all the corners of the world, now together. But most immediate with respect to context, is what precedes verse 9 in John’s recollection of his vision.

Verse 4-8 states:

4 And I heard a number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

5 from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand…8… from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.
What we have in the way of the more immediate and consequential context is a reference to Israel present in heaven represented by its 12 tribes.

Thus, following this scene is that of the church which provides for us, in this revelation, not what the demographics of every individual church should strive for or look like, rather, in this comparison, the fact that it will not just be Israel but through Christ, all nations, offered redemption and represented so in eternity’s heaven is what is being shown or revealed.

But let’s pretend that Rick Warren’s hermeneutic or method of Bible interpretation is correct and this passage is describing what the demographics of every individual local church should look like.
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What’s missing?

Pastor Warren, while telling us that every church’s demographics should look like Rev. 7:9, ignores the specific ingredients of the whole context with someone from every one of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel! I’ll be sure to call Saddleback to see if they have one of each.

All kidding aside, this is how bad Bible interpretation is exposed. Constantly testing the basis of someone’s interpretation is important and here we have done that with simplicity to uncover error.
To the second point, which is the property of the text. We must notice something important. John describes those who have been born again through faith in Christ, i.e., Christians, brought together as a single body. He describes them as believers from “every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues.”

That means that there are valid separations between such groups here on earth in a manner that may not afford the opportunity or even possibility of being together in a local congregation.

A matter as common as a language may separate them as well as geographic boundaries, and takes us back to something in which our being informed may be edified. Remember Acts 17:26?
Acts 17: 24-27a: (From Paul’s sermon at Mars Hill, parenthesis and emphasis, mine)

24 the God who made the world and all things in it… 26 made from one man every nation (ἔθνος - ethnos) of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God,

At one time, specifically Genesis 11, mankind was not separated by language and it appears this resulted in compounded commonality with regard to culture and other things so much so they fell in love with themselves and sought to guard against alienation from differences that might develop were they to scatter away from one another.
Genesis 11:3-4

3 They said to each other, “come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 then they said, “come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

God, however, had other plans.
5 the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 the LORD said, "behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. 7 come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech." 8 so the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

Now you understand why God separated man and why there are separate nations which have traditionally and historically been derived from a shared ethnicity (but not prescriptively) which ultimately came from groups who spoke a specific language, unlike other languages. So, that instead of seeking human-glorification, such a context would cause them to be prevented from this achievement and instead, they would be humbled in their limitations and caused to be oriented toward God.
But it also speaks to another reality which is how people are communicated to through language and culture and their conditioning.

Sometimes the properties resident in a language and culture can only effectively speak to people reared in that context. Hence, when someone else begins a dialog with them about matters of heaven, hell and the Gospel of Christ, there often is less weight than someone from their own background. This does not mean it has to be, simply that it is an observable reality with mankind.

This latter observation is simply a side-note and the major point is that it was God that has separated people by decree and that he has never revealed that on earth we are to share, in our local church, the exact demographics of heaven.
What we are to share, however, are all spiritual blessings. We are a spiritual community, a spiritual body with a one Spirit and one body.

Indeed, separated by language at times, nationality at times and sometimes, it is true that methods of cultural communication of Bible truths are difficult for different people. It is not the truths that are difficult, just the different properties of our expressions which sometimes do make it difficult for any and everyone to be at any and all church’s (assuming we shared in one confession worldwide).

Next week, the finale and a wonderful one it will be.
End Session Eight