



November 9, 2016

feeding...gathering...carrying...leading. (Isiah 40:11)

Dear Christ Our Shepherd,

Psalm 150

¹ Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his holy temple.

Praise him in his mighty heavens.

² Praise him for his powerful acts.

Praise him because he is greater than anything else.

³ Praise him by blowing trumpets.

Praise him with harps and lyres.

⁴ Praise him with tambourines and dancing.

Praise him with stringed instruments and flutes.

⁵ Praise him with clashing cymbals.

Praise him with clanging cymbals.

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

Additional Scripture Reference: Samuel 6:16-21

I'd really prefer not to sweeten my own tea, but unfortunately in many eating establishments sweet tea is not sold. So, I must do that thing, that is, add my own sugar to my iced tea. The sugar seems resistant to the process of assimilating its sweetness into the flatness of the iced tea. No matter how much I stir, the sugar continues to stubbornly refuse to submit to integrating with the tea it shares space with inside the glass. For me, it most often becomes an exercise in futility to think I will win the integration battle but I give it my best shot and receiving some semblance of sweet satisfaction. The choice I have, which is not really a choice, is to allow the sugar to remain at the bottom of the glass and have no effect on the taste of the tea at all. Therefore, if the sugar is to contribute to the overall enjoyment of the customer the iced tea must be intentionally stirred and stirred and stirred. Similarly, the wedge of lemon hanging on the rim of the glass must be squeezed and the mint leaves lying on top must be mashed if there is to be the flavor of lemon and a hint of mint added to this wonderfully delightful glass of cool refreshing goodness.

This describes the dilemma of many African Americans and other ethnic groups who are attending "Multicultural Churches". These churches are very welcoming of other cultures to their worship but the expectation is for these members to assimilate, or per my illustration, remain dormant, docile and thankful to be a part of the congregation, but remain at the bottom of the glass.

Such was my experience at the school I attended which was a White institution of higher learning. I was genuinely made to feel accepted and welcomed at the school. I learned and gleaned so much from entering another world and culture. It changed the trajectory of my ministry and preaching/teaching style. I was distinctly a different voice from the typical African American Pastor. I am the best example of the premise that, "All growth comes from exposure". What did

not happen is the sad saga of many predominately White Multicultural Churches - the school allowed me to leave their campus without the benefit of gleaning anything from my presence on their campus. In summary, I had entered their world and was the benefactor of that exchange but they did not enter my world and benefit from my culture and presence among them. I was relegated to remaining at the bottom of the glass.

The biblical challenge in scripture is this: 1 Corinthians 1:22, "The Jew requires a sign and Greeks seek after wisdom." This text suggests the possible reason for the difference in worship styles between people of color and white congregants. The Jew represents the people groups of the earth who are more experiential and visual by nature. They demanded of Jesus that He, "show them a sign." We want to believe you but we need visual, tangible proof that you are who you say you." Conversely Greeks don't need visual tangible proof of Christ deity but rather they required intellectual proof of His deity. "Don't show us but rather convince us rationally." Thus, we hear of Paul in their temples arguing with the Greeks. King Agrippa proclaimed to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Then we see why the worship experience for the White Christian is more cerebral and worship for the Black Christian is more experiential. My dear friend and brother Pastor Mc Alpine and I have entered each other's world. I'm eating at French restaurants because of him and he's eating at places serving "comfort food." My world now includes pastors who look like him and vice versa. Our schedules are filled with each other's associates.

Have you entered the world of your brothers and sisters of Ebony hue that because of them you to be able to proudly say that Christ Our Shepherd is a racially diverse congregation? But is it diverse or is it an assimilating church where people of color have not been stirred into the mix of everything? Whose music do you sing? Whose music do you prefer? Whose music is on your playlist? Stuart has entered our world of worship music. His playlist is sprinkled with African American music.

If you don't know where to start here are a few musical suggestions. "Praise and Worship songs of Richard Smallwood. His song we sang on Sunday was "Total Praise." The second song was by Hezekiah Walker, "Every Praise". If I might take a liberty let me plug the new cd of my son in law, Daniel Weatherspoon, "The Langley Park Project", for those of you who may be jazz lovers. Its #1 on Billboard's Charts in the Jazz genre!!

Pastoral Blessings,
Pastor Rogers, *Triumphant DC*