

LOOSING LAZZARUS

LESSON 6

JESUS SPOKE,
SO I MUST SPEAK!

SEVEN WAYS TO DECONSTRUCT PERSONAL AND STRUCTURAL RACISM FROM JOHN 11

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LESSON 6: JESUS SPOKE, SO I MUST SPEAK!

Now when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" John 11:43

When Jesus used His voice, He used His power. When He told the bedridden man to take up his bed and walk, He used His power. When Jesus told the woman allegedly caught in adultery "I don't condemn you," He used His power. When the Master of the sea said to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still," the Lord used His unmatched power.

When Jesus said, "Let there be light," and there was light, He used His power. In fact, Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." Jesus has the power to create everything and anything out of nothing. John chapter 11 teaches us how Jesus used His words to change the life of a dead man named Lazarus. I just so happen to believe if God can do that for Lazarus, He can also do the same for "Lazarius" in our culture. Jesus publicly and specifically called Lazarus by his name that day. By doing so, Jesus was saying,

"Lazarus, I see you."

"Lazarus, I value you."

"Lazarus, I care about you."

"Lazarus, I am here to help you."

"Lazarus, I am not afraid to publicly identify with you."

"Lazarus, I am not ashamed to say your name in public."

"Lazarus, I love you."

Think about it. Where would you and I be today if Jesus had not lovingly called our names when we were dead in our trespasses and sins (*Ephesians 2:1*)? Jesus said in John 5:25, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." The Bible doesn't explain how it happens, but physically and spiritually dead people can hear the voice of the Lord telling them to come alive.

When Jesus used His voice, He used His power on behalf of the powerless. When we use our voices, we are using our power, as well. No wonder Proverbs 31:8 says, “Open your mouth for the speechless, in the case of all who are appointed to die.”

The late Representative and Civil Rights Movement icon John Lewis once said on the floors of Congress, “When you see something that is not right, not just, not fair, you have a moral obligation to say something, to do something.” God encourages His people to be advocates for those who lack equal access and consideration. An advocate is a person with power who shows up, stands up, and speaks up on behalf of those who lack power.

God expects us to speak up on behalf of the unheard and the overlooked, the unborn and the poor born. Until the disenfranchised can come to the table where decisions are made, advocates must use their voices at the table on behalf of those who are caught up in a system that leads to limited life experiences and unwarranted death sentences. It was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” King also said, “There comes a time when silence is betrayal.”

In his groundbreaking book, *The Color of Compromise*, author Jemar Tisby writes, “At several points in American history—the colonial era, Reconstruction, the demise of Jim Crow—Christians could have confronted racism instead of compromising. Although missed opportunities are heartbreaking, the fact that people can choose is also empowering. Christians deliberately chose complicity with racism in the past, but the choice to confront racism remains a possibility today.” White brothers and sisters, as you use your voices, try saying some of these things:

- » “I see you and I hear you.”
- » “I stand with you.”
- » “That’s wrong and you know it! You would never treat my child that way.”
- » “Black Lives Matter!”
- » “No justice, no peace!”
- » “I’m sorry and I’m going to make this right.”
- » “The institutions in this country were designed to be unjust towards people of color.”
- » “It’s time we tell the truth about slavery, the Civil War, and segregation.”
- » “My grandfather was wrong.”
- » “If structural racism is the misuse of institutional power over and against certain people groups, how and when have black people been structural racists in this country?”

- » “I benefit from the system in ways that people of color have not and cannot.”
- » “White privilege doesn’t mean that I haven’t worked hard. It just means that my skin color hasn’t had to make me work harder or face discrimination along the way.”
- » “I’ve never had to give my children ‘the talk,’ and I won’t rest until you no longer have to do that with your children.”
- » “Jesus was not white and it does matter how He is depicted.”
- » “Just because I’ve adopted black children or married a black person, I still have a lot to learn.”
- » “I submit myself to black leadership.”
- » “I use my privilege and my platform to empower others who are non-white.”

However, there are some things white brothers and sisters should not use your voices to say:

- » “You need to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.”
- » “The race problem would go away if you stopped talking about it.”
- » “It’s a sin problem, not a skin problem.”
- » “I don’t see color.”
- » “I never owned slaves.”
- » “What about black-on-black crime?”
- » “Just preach the gospel.”
- » “But what about ‘black privilege?’”
- » “What about black babies who get aborted?”
- » “There’s only one race, the human race.”
- » “Beware of the leftist agenda, Marxism, and Critical Race Theory.”
- » “Blue Lives Matter!”
- » “My best friend growing up was black.”
- » “All Lives Matter!”
- » “The black man who was killed by the police was a thug!”
- » “The white man who shot up the place was a lone wolf and misguided.”
- » “That would have never happened had he simply complied.”

- » “Those people have a victim’s mentality.”
- » “White people get shot by the police, too.”
- » “What about Ben Carson and Candace Owens?”
- » “What about all of that rioting and looting?”
- » “There is no such thing as racism. It’s in the past.”

Will you use your voice respectfully? Will you use your power courageously? Is it time to use your vote differently on the local and federal level? Jesus knew Lazarus’ name and He called him by it because He loved him. He showed up at the tomb and called His friend out of that deathly, dark predicament. By using His voice, Jesus used His power.

It’s time that all of us who claim to be His disciples did the same thing by speaking up for our fellow human beings who are trapped behind barricades of unfairness and inequity.

Can God count on you to use your voice?

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 01.** What white people do you admire for using their voices and thus their power to come against racism?
- 02.** Why is using your voice to speak out against structural racism such a potentially costly thing for white people to do?
- 03.** What things on Dr. Williamson's list of "Things white people should say" do you agree with and disagree with? What would you add?
- 04.** What things on Dr. Williamson's list of "Things white people should not say" do you agree with and disagree with? What would you add?
- 05.** How can you use your voice and your power to make substantive changes to the scope of race-related issues in America and in the church?

