

LOOSING LAZZARUS WRAP-UP

GET YOUR
CHAINSaws!



SEVEN WAYS TO DECONSTRUCT PERSONAL AND STRUCTURAL RACISM FROM JOHN 11

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WRAP-UP:
GET YOUR CHAINSAWS!

Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. John 11:53

In early 2020, the city of Nashville made national headlines when it was hit by a massive tornado. The city known as the "Athens of the South" was greatly damaged and devastated. Homes, businesses and churches were destroyed. Power lines went defunct. Telephone poles were knocked over, and the streets were filled with all kinds of debris making it nearly impossible for cars to travel. Not only that, dozens of trees were pulled up from the roots and sprawled out in the streets and on people's lawns.

These fallen trees were too large to move out of the way in the residential areas, and the professionals with heavy machinery were nowhere to be found because of the immediate demand on their services. Several communities chose to come together and do something about these problems facing their neighborhoods. Citizens of every hue, ethnic background, economic status, religious affiliation, and political persuasion decided to work together because they realized they all faced the same insurmountable problems. Thankfully, people with chainsaws emerged and began to dismantle and deconstruct each tree into pieces. By cutting the trees up with chainsaws and hauling off the manageable portions, the neighborhoods once again became clear and safe. The trees that were deemed impossible to move became movable because of the people's intentionality and willingness to work in collaboration.

By the time America was formally founded in 1776, a poisoned tree called "Racism" had already been growing in this country since 1619 when the first Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. My ancestors were bought and sold at that American tree called racism. They were separated from their families at that tree. They were whipped at that tree and stripped of their African tongue, name, and culture at that tree. They were raped under that tree and they were hung from the limbs of that tree like strange fruit.

Over the years, praise God, many of those limbs were eventually cut down. Some branches fell with the Emancipation Proclamation. Some branches fell with the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. Some branches fell with *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. Some fell with the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Acts. Other branches fell when Barak Obama was nominated as the 44th President of the United States. Although there were many white abolitionists who played an important role in seeing these branches come down, the social progress we see today is primarily due to God and the initiation, resistance, faith, diligence, bravery, and activism of Africans who have been exiled here in America.

That being said, I believe in 2020 God chose to send a great wind from heaven to do more than knock more branches off of the evil tree of racism. Instead, He sent a mighty wind to expose and uproot the entire tree! With this monstrous impediment to human decency, brotherhood and progress being freshly toppled, its structural roots are now exposed. What was once covert, rarely seen, and hardly acknowledged about institutional racism is now obvious and clearly seen by all who have eyes to see. This tree doesn't need to be replanted; it needs to be cut into pieces by each one of us and hauled off or burned in our fireplaces.

If you and I can responsibly and faithfully deal with the portions of personal and structural racism that are right in front of us, we can make our country a better and safer place for everyone. If each of us will grab our chainsaws and do our part, structural racism can be obliterated and eventually replaced with a tree of life.

Life is what we all want and all need. When Jesus walked into Bethany, He went there as the resurrection and the life. Lazarus was in a terrible bind of death, yet everything unraveled when Jesus went, wept, led, taught, prayed, spoke, and empowered. A miracle occurred and Jesus was momentarily celebrated and adored, but all of that quickly shifted. On the heels of this magnificent resurrection came immense hatred from the Pharisees. The Man who brought life to Lazarus was now forced to walk the streets in secrecy (*John 11:54*).

As you embark upon doing the things that Jesus did so as to deconstruct personal and structural racism, you must prepare yourself for the rejection and the attacks that are sure to come your way. Whatever you do, decide not to allow the persecution to stop you from loving your neighbors well in word and deed. Keep going when family and close friends pull away. Expect to be criticized by Christians as well as unbelievers for engaging in the work of biblical justice and reconciliation. Expect to be called names by people on the right and on the left. You will no longer be invited to the functions you hold dear, but be of good courage because great is your reward in heaven! In addition to that heavenly promise, every now and then God will visit you with some heaven on earth and allow you to see the last become first!

Brothers and sisters, grab your chainsaws, which are like the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Allow the truth of God's word to cut and minister to your hearts first as you preach the gospel to yourself and then to others. Keep in mind that the good news of the gospel is for saved sinners and unsaved sinners. Remind yourself that the gospel is found in John 3:16 and Luke 4:18. The gospel is both personal and communal. It is vertical and horizontal, spiritual and natural. It empties and it fills. The gospel is hands up to God and hands on with your fellow man, and this powerful gospel brings Jews and Gentiles to Jesus and to one another.

When it comes to race in America, you are now better equipped to answer the question for yourself and for others who ask "What can I do?" after another black person is unjustly killed on the streets or denied true justice in society. Take yourself and them to John chapter 11 in order to see Jesus modeling how we can all minister to Lazarus and Lazarius. The time is now. Let's join God and be on the right side of human history in our era.

