



INDEPENDENT
Presbyterian Church

Address to the Congregation of Independent Presbyterian Church on **Sunday, May 13, 2012**
Read by *Ruling Elder*, Sam Graham, on behalf of the Session of IPC

Eight years ago in Birmingham, AL, the 32nd General Assembly of the PCA approved and adopted A Pastoral Letter regarding the Sin of Racism and its prolonged existence in the church. It was commended to all PCA churches to clarify the position of the PCA regarding racism in the past, present and future.

A three year period which followed that General Assembly was a time of transition at Independent Presbyterian Church following the departure of a long-time, much beloved Senior Minister of 27 years.

In 2007, the Session of IPC adopted the PCA's Pastoral Letter on Racism as our church's position and policy. It was referred to an Ad Hoc Committee of the Session for additional review regarding its implementation.

In late 2010, the Session passed four resolutions and exhorted our Senior Pastor to select a time to preach from this pulpit regarding what Scripture teaches about this subject. He has just done so and will continue to do so as the Spirit leads him.

It is my privilege and responsibility on behalf of the Session to communicate the following four statements:

1. The congregation of Independent Presbyterian shall be informed of the PCA Pastoral Letter on the Gospel and Race.
2. There shall be set aside a season of prayer and study of the Scriptures regarding corporate and individual confession of sin – with specific acknowledgement of the sin of racism using the Scripture-based PCA Pastoral Paper as a guide.

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. - Proverbs 28:13

I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against You. - Nehemiah 1:5-6

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His Word has no place in our lives. - 1 John 1:9-10

We begin this process with a reminder of the atoning work of Christ as the foundation for all we do. As we address the sin of racism, we do so NOT because it may be considered politically correct, nor out of any pressure from outward society. We do so because it is our desire to live out the whole counsel of God's word.

3. On behalf of the Session, this public address to you today specifically marks the beginning of a time of corporate confession and repentance by Independent Presbyterian Church (past and present) regarding the sin of racism.

Just as we celebrate those aspects of our history at Independent Presbyterian Church of which we

are proud, we must also acknowledge with sadness and renounce and repudiate those practices in our history that do not reflect biblical standards. We profess, acknowledge and confess before God, before one another, and before the watching world, that tolerance of forced or institutional segregation based on race, and declarations of the inferiority of certain races, such as once were practiced and supported by our church and many other voices in the Presbyterian tradition, were wrong and cannot and will not be accepted within our church today or ever again. The Lord calls us to repent of the sin of prejudice; to turn from it and to treat all persons with justice, mercy, and love.

4. As a church, we will strive to be more intentional and proactive with ministry opportunities for the congregation to serve the city of Memphis as redemptive, Gospel-driven agents seeking the peace and prosperity of ALL of Memphis.

Jeremiah 29 says ...

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

It is known throughout our nation that the city of Memphis has a long and difficult history of racial strife. Our church was born perhaps at the height of the civil rights struggle. Three years later, the world witnessed the tragedy of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. which took place only nine miles from here.

Today IPC has a unique opportunity to demonstrate how God has transformed a church that once held firmly to segregation principles into a church whose heart is broken over the racism in this city and a church that devotes significant time and resources today to serving the inner city's poor and proactively seeks racial reconciliation through the Gospel.

Our congregation, the broader evangelical church, Memphis, the South and the world would benefit from hearing about IPC's testimony of God's grace and redemptive work in this area. Consistent with our historical adherence to Scripture, our church shall not allow anything to get in the way of the proclamation of the whole counsel of the Gospel. The doors of this church shall be open to ALL, regardless of race, ethnic differences, or social class.

Now let us go to our God who is the only source of redemptive power and who can help us press forward.

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy Triune God, we have just heard Your inerrant word preached boldly. We thank You for our Senior Minister, your servant Richie, who has been so powerfully anointed by Your Spirit. Please protect our church and protect Richie and our other ministers from the arrows of the wicked. May this church always be known as a place where Your Word is preached in grace and truth.

Father, for over 47 years, You have loved the people of this church with unfailing grace and mercy, and You have constantly called us, but we have not loved You above all nor have we consistently listened. You have asked us to love one another and to love our neighbors as ourselves, but all too often we have been wrapped up in our own concerns, and we have been selective about who we choose to call our neighbor. Father, please forgive us.

On this second Sunday of May, 2012, before You and before a watching world, we Lift High the Cross / the Love of Christ Proclaim, and as unanimously resolved by the elders of this church, we corporately confess the sin of racism

- both past and present;
- overt racism and the equally if not more sinister clandestine, covert racism of which I too am guilty

Father we repent of our pride, we repent of our complacency and our indifference. As a church, we

corporately repent of our prolonged silence and complicity regarding the wretched sin of racism that has tormented our city and our nation and divided too many for too long.

Forgive our faults and failures, our deceit and disobedience, both of yesterday and also today.

We repent in spirit and in truth, confessing this sin and humbly receiving your forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We pray You will fill us with Your Spirit and help us as a church to share the truth of the Gospel adhering both to orthodoxy and to orthopraxy through our deeds (both as individuals both also as a church) as we love ALL of our neighbors with open arms and color-blind hearts. Father, use IPC as a Gospel Witness in this city. May this church be a shining example of Your redemptive power as we spur one another on to love and good deeds, acting according to the Gospel across all social, racial, and economic boundaries to the Glory of Your name.

Thank you for the healing power of confession, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

May we go forward this day in renewed commitment to the whole Gospel. May it be known throughout this city and beyond ...

- THAT the doors of this church are open to ALL – to sinners and to saints.
- May we be a warm and welcoming congregation reflecting the love and mercy of Christ both inside and outside of this church.
- May our love be so amazing, so Christ-like, that it will permeate our souls, our lives ... our all.
- May our words, our attitudes and our actions, serve only to glorify You as your light shines through this church to brighten this city, this nation and this world.

In the name of Him ... who alone knows the hearts of all men. Our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

AMEN