

Flourishing IN A LAND FULL OF FEAR!

A Christian response to the state of our nation

Part 2

Introduction:

Last week we looked at how we, as Christians, should love God and love others, regardless of where we live or the circumstances surrounding us. Our country needs a flourishing church - we do this by loving our enemies, forgiving those who hate us, storing up treasure in heaven and extending kindness, and that is what God has called us to do, here in Johannesburg. Our call, based on Matthew 28:18-20, is to go out and make disciples. This means engaging proactively in our nation, knowing that Jesus is the one in authority, rather than being fearful and critical. This week, we focus first on what kind of people the Lord wants us to be as he sends us out on his redemptive mission, according to his word, and then what it looks like for us to live that out practically.

The People Of God Are Sent Into The World To Flourish As "Resident Aliens"

▪ Read 1 Peter 2:9-12

A resident alien is a "foreigner who is a permanent resident of the country in which he/she resides, but does not have citizenship" (Investopedia - Resident Alien, 2015). As Christians, our citizenship is in heaven, but we are permanent residents here. We are supposed to live as good news to those around us, and our internal difference should overflow very tangibly into the lives of others, to the point that they realize we are not the same as everyone else.

There are 3 ways in which we as "resident aliens" should live:

RESTORE, RECONCILE & RESIST

1. "Resident Aliens" Lovingly Restore

We can play our part in restoring pockets of our communities when we start asking what we can do, with what we do have, in the area where God has placed us, instead of grumbling about what the government is failing to achieve. As a church community, we need to think about what it means for us to be on God's mission in our everyday lives. The acrostic below, developed by Exponential Church (Dave Ferguson, 2012), is a helpful way for us think about how to live intentionally as a blessing in our own areas:

- **B = Begin with prayer**
 - **L = Listen**
 - **E = Eat**
 - **S = Serve**
 - **S = Share**
- ❖ Q: Why is it such a foreign thought for us to even think about the good of our neighbourhood and our role in it?
 - ❖ Q: What do you think it could look like for us to be agents of restoration, right now, in the suburbs in which we live?
 - ❖ Q: Why is it crucial that we get involved proactively in restoration around us?
 - ❖ Q: How do you think the acrostic above could help us to think about being restorers in a practical and regular way?

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2. "Resident Aliens" Radically Reconcile

▪ **Read Ephesians 2:14-22**

South Africa is a deeply wounded country, and one of very few where the minority oppressed the majority. The damage is so wide-spread, and has impacted our people so profoundly, that the scars will probably always remain to some degree. It is unfair to expect people to just "get over it", and it is equally unfair to use it as an excuse for corruption. It is important for us to realize and acknowledge how complex it is. Be that as it may, the church, as Christians, should be completely different to the world in terms of its experience of reconciliation. We should be unified in heart and mind, and yet, ironically, the church in South Africa still seems to be largely divided.

We can start bringing about change if we proactively and intentionally do the following:

- **Listen More** - hear and really listen to the narratives of people unlike us. Have our homes open to others and engage in meaningful hospitality.
 - **Learn More About** -
 - ✓ the cultures around us
 - ✓ languages others speak
 - ✓ privilege and systemic prejudice - be humble enough to acknowledge your own.
 - **Live Differently** - desire change and start to work on it in some way.
- ❖ Q: Why do you think it is so important that we, as the church, live out authentic reconciliation in our country, and what do you think that would look like in our community?
 - ❖ Q: How do you think that listening to people's stories (those people who are different from us) will help us to move towards reconciliation?
 - ❖ Q: Why is learning about other cultures essential for unity?
 - ❖ Personal Reflection Question: Is your heart truly bent towards reconciliation or do you have race/class issues in your heart that you need the Lord to deal with? Can you identify if the heart issue is a false sense of superiority or if it has to do with un-forgiveness? We need to deal with these things and have our hearts restored.

3. "Resident Aliens" Humbly Resist

▪ **Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13**

Our obedience/disobedience to Christ impacts on others in the church. We need to be putting sin to death so that our church can flourish. We do not need to try to fix the sin of those outside of the church; we are to be serving them, and one way we are to do that is by living different lives, as though we really do have a real hope. As resident aliens, we are called to peaceful resistance. We resist:

- The deceitfulness of sin, by repenting openly and honestly, and calling each other to lives of holiness and worship.
 - The scourge of rampant materialism, by living lives of simplicity and generosity.
 - The feeling of despondency, by being a people whose hope is in our eternal home.
- We are called to be agents of change and hope.

- ❖ Q: Why does our personal sin affect the world around us?
- ❖ Q: Why is it important for us to pursue holiness and worship, and to call the rest of our church community to the same?
- ❖ Personal Reflection Question: Are you pursuing a life of holiness and worship, or does your life look just like the world around you. Think about your relationships, morality, generosity, speech, lawfulness etc.