

Critical Race Theory: A sample sermon for pastors' use.

Extended sermon text

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[Thinking Christian Blog](#)

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- Note: *You'll want to consider how much of this not to use. There may be more than you'd want to share with your congregation all at once. I've intentionally chosen to err on the side of too much rather than too little, as I know it's easier for you to remove than to add this kind of material. Except for this: I don't have many illustrations in here, either personal stories or stories from the news. It's mostly plain of 333ld factual information. I'm not suggesting that's how you'd want to preach it. A sermon needs stories. Just not my stories. You'll want to use yours, not mine.*

Introduction

Opening Scripture: Galatians 1:6-10

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

False Teachers Then

Those are strong words. Paul brought the Galatians good news, the news of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected, the news of new life in Him, of freedom from sin, of life in the Spirit. It's a good life. It's eternal life.

But there were false teachers there, teachers who came in to impose rules, to take away their freedom to follow God in Christ through the life of the Spirit. They came with all kinds of restrictions and demands. And do you see how strongly Paul speaks out against them? "Accursed!" It's the same word in the Greek that we use sometimes in English: "anathema." But Paul's language is even stronger than that. He's talking about eternal damnation.

We have false teachers like that today. We have one set of new false teaching that's overrun the country, though you can be sure would get Paul's strong condemnation. It's in all the news. It's even made its way into the church. It looks good on the surface, or at least it does to a lot of people. You can get a lot of social approval, pats on the back from everyone, for following it. But as Paul says in chapter 1, verse 10 here, trying to please men means you cannot please God; you cannot be a servant of Christ.

False Teaching Now

This new false teaching is critical race theory. Yes, it's a false teaching. And yes, it's wrong in ways that conflict with the truth that we know is true in Christ. It overlaps with Christianity, and competes with it, in so many ways, I'd say you could just about call it a new religion. It may not talk about God, but it's got all the other elements: right and wrong, sin, confession, repentance, a vision of a perfect future world and an explanation of how this one went wrong. It even has an "ultimate concern," to borrow words from one theologian's [Paul Tillich's] definition of religion.

I can almost guarantee you've run into CRT as I'll call it. It may have been in the form of conflict at work, at school, or even among family members, and unless you've dug in and done some study on it, you're probably wondered what to make of it. Should we buy into it? Or not?

Previewing the Message

We're going to take a look at CRT this morning. We're going to look at Christianity, too. I'll have to be brief with it, naturally, but I'm going to do all I can in the time available here to show you how Christianity answers some of life's most basic questions, and how CRT has different answers, different in very important ways. In the end, I think you'll see that even though CRT has some

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And so, because it gives these wrong answers, and because it's so prominent and so controversial, I want to take these moments to help you understand it. But this isn't only about CRT. I can't properly help you understand CRT's wrong answers without reviewing the right answers, the truth as we know it from the Word of God.

Before we get there, though, we need to define what we're talking about. What is critical race theory?

What Does Critical Race Theory Seek?

What is critical race theory? Is it a new way to understand black experience in America? Yes. Is it a new approach to solving the problem of racism? Yes. Does it have original ideas for new ways to achieve justice for persons of all skin colors? It certainly has that.

And that's why on the surface it seems like such a good idea to so many people. [I'm counting on black pastors to adapt the following for your circumstance. Better for you to do that than for me to try to guess what you'd want to say.] Understanding is good. So is addressing racism, and so is justice.

Christianity Led the Way

So we do not criticize CR for wanting to solve racial problems. People who oppose it get accused of wanting to keep racism alive, to keep whites in control, even. No. Absolutely not. We who follow Jesus believe that all persons are created in God's image. Nothing could be clearer in Scripture:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26, 27).

Let's look further at Galatians 3:26-28:

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Thus we know there is no distinction of worth, no religious separation, between male and female, slave and free, Jew or Greek, which meant ethnic difference. We know that God loved the whole world enough to die for everyone. In the passage called the Great Commission, Jesus' final words on earth according to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28, verses 18-20, he said,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

He called us to reach the nations for Christ, and the word He used there was *ethne*, from which we get "ethnic" groups. Jesus included all nations, all *ethnic groups*, in his love and in his mission.

And Christians have followed his example. Not perfectly, of course; we've had failures, and we could dwell on those, but in these days it's probably better to recall thata

Christ-followers were the first anti-racists, in the right sense of the term. One example: Every family and community has always taken care of its own. Christianity has been identified down through history as the first group of people who went out of their way to provide education, medical help, agricultural help, humanitarian aid, to people from completely different countries, languages, religions, and races. Christianity invented cross-cultural care. Actually, Jesus Christ did. We're just following Him in it.

So these things are good to pursue. The problem with CRT isn't that it wants certain things. The problem is that it goes about achieving them so badly.

Let me repeat that in different worlds, because people get it wrong all the time. The reason I don't agree with CRT isn't because I want racism to last. It's because CRT has all wrong answers to it. Christianity is not racist. Christianity led the way in conquering racism, centuries ago. Christianity's problem with CRT has nothing to do with whether we ought to solve racism. Christianity's problem with CRT is that it goes about solving that problem in a very bad way. A racist way, even.

What is Critical Race Theory?

How will we define CRT, though? What really is it? I'm going to spend the rest of this message answering that, and I'm going to do it by asking how it answers the ultimate questions I mentioned earlier on.

Academic Origins

I do need to tell you up front that there's no official definition for CRT. Different people, including critical race theorists, will say it in different ways. (Critical race theorists call themselves "crits," by the way.) Everyone agrees that it started out as an academic and legal approach toward identifying and solving racism. It began with a Harvard Law School professor named Derrick Bell, back in the 1970s — yes, that long ago; are you surprised to hear that? — and it stayed pretty much contained in the universities for a long time. Not really contained there, though: They taught it to our kids there; or maybe they taught it to you.

Born of Impatience with the Civil Rights Movement's Results

The original crits were impatient. That's not me criticizing them; they use the word themselves. They looked at all the advances in race relations during the Civil Rights era, and they said, "That's fine, thank you, but it's not enough. We got the laws we want but we didn't get the equality we want. So it wasn't enough, and it's never going to be enough, not as long as we keep doing it that way. The problem isn't just laws, and it isn't just attitudes. The problem is that America was built *by* whites, and it was built *for* whites. They're dominant. They've been dominant so long, they hardly even know how dominant they are.

"So they've built structures and systems and institutions that fit whiteness. The same structures and systems and institutions aren't so friendly to blacks. We've been trying to fix racism incrementally, one little thing after another, one law at a time, or one person's attitude at a time. That won't solve the structure problem. We need to change the structures. In fact, we need to tear them down and replace them."

Vague on Systemic Racism

Which structures? That's where they get vague. They talk a lot about structural racism or systemic racism or institutional racism, but when we ask them which structures or systems or institutions, they get vague. Or if they do spell it out, it's troublesome. And here again I'm not merely criticizing, I'm quoting. They're "impatient," they say, with our Constitution. They're impatient with our nation's dreams and efforts for equality. They're impatient with incremental change. They're not just talking about changing things at the fringes. Some of them are aiming straight at the Constitution.

Whiteness is the Problem

And if you listen to the later crits, or some of the new thinking that's been spawned off CRT, you'll find that the major problem in America is "whiteness." That's how some of them put it. I'm not sure it was in the original CRT thinking, but it's a major part of it now.

So that's some of what critical race theory is. It's a movement to solve racism by solving whiteness. They don't aim to remove whiteness, just its power. They take aim at structures and systems and institutions that white people created for white people's own purposes. And we're talking major change here. Like revolution, revolution aimed at our legal system, even our Constitution. Remember last summer's "Defund the police"? That was part of it, too. Find some so-called "white" system and tear away at it!

Revolutionary Answers Called For

They didn't tell people to go set Portland or Seattle on fire. I don't know that they'd be happy that people took them that way. But they used the word "revolution" in their book. They meant it. And people took them seriously. Portland and Seattle and other so-called "peaceful protests" that included burning buildings? There's a straight line between the thinking you see in critical race writings, and the behavior you saw on the streets last summer.

Critical race theory started as academic legal theory, but it hasn't stayed there. The concept was planted there, but it didn't grow straight up like a well-cultivated bush. It went wild. It spread. It spread like weeds spread. And as it both grew and spread, it changed. The original crits may or may not like what it's become, but there's nothing they can do about it. It's out in the wild now, so to speak.

That's what it sounds like, and I don't think it's the least bit surprising that it sounds that way. That's what it was born for. It was born for revolution.

CRT's Totalizing Nature

Now along with this you have to recognize how crits take racism as pretty much the whole story, the only problem, so CRT is the only answer. You've noticed on the news how just about everything that can get labeled racism gets labeled that way, and some things that *can't* seriously be labeled racism get labeled that way anyway.

Racism is almost like the only sin you have to watch out against committing. There's anti-gayness, too, or anti-earth, or anti-whatever most of which is actually related; there's critical theory for sexuality, too, for example. Still racism is the big one. It's because CRT acts and lives as though racism is the only problem in town, and CRT itself is the one big answer to that one big problem.

How It's a False Gospel

So, CRT is about massive societal change to solve racism. Now let's look at how it answers several basic questions. These are the kinds of questions that really get to the heart of a thing. I mean, if you want to know what some new trend in thinking is all about, start here and you'll know what makes it tick. You can study the outsides all you want, but these questions and answers will take you all the way in to the insides.

Christianity's Five Answers

Here are the questions. According to CRT,

1. What is ultimate reality?
2. What does it mean to be human?
3. What is the ideal life we should strive for??
4. What is our basic human problem?
5. How is that basic human problem solved?

Do those questions sound complicated? Let me illustrate how they work by showing how we answer them as Christians.

- *What is ultimate reality?* God. Simply that.
 - *What is ultimate reality?* What? Why are even asking? We don't talk about that around here. We've got problems to solve. Big ones. Racism!
- *What does it mean to be human?* It means we're specially created by a good, loving, and holy God, in His image, and meant to reflect His goodness, love, and holiness. Genesis 1:25-26.
 - *What does it mean to be human?* Crits don't have a formal answer to the question. Read their literature, though, and you'll pick up the most important thing about being human. The most important thing about us as humans is our race. [Crits often say race isn't real, it doesn't have a biological basis for it, and we shouldn't treat it as real. They say that, but they keep on acting as if the most important thing about us is our race.]

- *What is the ideal life we should strive for?* Our best life is a life lived in relationship with God, modeled after Jesus Christ, who obeyed the Father in all things, and experiencing God's goodness. That's the best possible life.
 - *What is the ideal life we should strive for?* The best thing, the number one thing we should hope to achieve, is racial equity: equally distributed money and political power among all the races. That's what social justice looks like, and that's what they're after.
- *What is the basic human problem?* The basic human problem is sin. We've disobeyed God, we've lost connection with Him, we've become rebellious against Him; and every other problem we have, from relational hurts to sickness to death, is a direct result of our rebellion toward God. (Genesis 3)
 - *What is the basic human problem?* The basic human problem is whites in charge. Whites have been in charge so long, they don't even realize how much they're in charge. It's a world by whites, for whites. In fact, it's so bad, we can even tell you the problem in one word. The problem is whiteness. Whiteness is the problem.
- *How is that basic human problem solved?* God solved it for us, by sending His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross and pay the penalty for our sins, and then to rise from dead. That opened the door for justice and forgiveness at the same time it also meant death had been conquered. Our part is to put true, living faith in Jesus, and to walk with him in growing knowledge, faith, and love.
 - *How is that basic human problem solved?* Blacks aren't the problem, so they don't have any problem to solve as far as CRT is concerned. Whites are the only ones who have a problem. They can't change the color of their skin, but they can get "woke" about it. They can check their privilege. They can renounce their whiteness. But nothing's really going to change anyway until we topple and replace all these racist structures and institutions.

CRT's Five Answers

Five questions, five answers. Now let's hear how CRT answers those questions. f

Comparing Two Differences

So let's just focus in on two of these questions, and show the differences.

First, What's the ideal life we should strive for? For Christianity, it's all centered in God; for CRTs, the word God never has to enter into the conversation.

Second, what's the solution? For Christians it's forgiveness and freedom in Christ (Gal. 4:1). For CRT it's white shame. Shame, renunciation, and privilege-checking, and when you're done with that one day, the next day there's shame, renunciation, and privilege-checking again. That's because the next day, whites are still white. There is no forgiveness. No freedom. No success.

It's what Christian theologians call legalism, the idea that by following the right moral laws we can make ourselves better. But it goes one worse, saying that they only answer is for whites to do all these things, and they have to do it, but they can't make themselves better.

CRT gets God wrong. It gets the problem wrong. It gets the ideal solution wrong, and it gets the practical solution wrong. It's all wrong in direct conflict with Christianity. So that's why I say it's practically a false religion all by itself.

It's certainly a different gospel. The real gospel tells us of forgiveness, freedom, and life in Christ. CRT ignores all that, as if it weren't literally the most important thing in the world. CRT says instead we have to live under a yoke of slavery to our skin color. And that's the answer it gives to what it considers life's greatest problem.

There's a lot more to CRT, stuff I really disagree with, stuff I seriously dislike, stuff that's badly wrong. We don't need to go into all that. It's on the surface; we looked at the care, the heart of it instead. It's badly wrong. If it's diseased on the inside, then no matter how things look on the outside, you still know it's diseased where it really counts. And in this case that's enough to make it a false gospel. It's enough for us to treat it as the apostle Paul treated every other false gospel: He called them out as deadly wrong.

That's why I'm calling out CRT today. It's deadly wrong. f

So What Do You Do?

1. First, know the true gospel inside out. Trust Christ with your life, then learn His ways so you can truly follow them.
2. When you get into a dispute with someone who likes CRT, don't attack. Ask questions instead. Jesus used questions all the time, hundreds of times, even. Earlier here I we asked five questions about what CRT believes. You could ask them, too. Maybe a first one would be, "How do you think CRT can help bring about racial harmony?" Listen, then ask, "What led you to that conclusion?" Listen some more. And then, "Do you see any potential problems there?" Maybe they'll realize them on their own.