

RECLAIMING JESUS:

A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis

Bible Study July 10 7 PM

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Based on the Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis
Statement Issued on the site of ReclaimingJesus.org.

As Disciples of Jesus the Christ:

- ▶ We are called to be His followers.
- ▶ Our identity in Christ precedes every other identity.
- ▶ People should see the Jesus in us and in His Church. John 13:34-35

Our Responsibility As It Relates to Politics

- ▶ The church's role is to change the world through the life and love of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ The government's role is to serve the common good by protecting justice and peace, rewarding good behavior while restraining bad behavior (Romans 13).
- ▶ When politics undermines our theology, we must examine that politics.



As the Church, We Must:

- Ephesians 4:11-15
- Stand up and speak out -
-- especially our Church leadership.
- Speak the truth in love to one another.

As the Church, We Must:

- Name and warn against:
 - Temptations
 - Racial and cultural captivities
 - False doctrines
 - And political idolatries (and even our complicity in them)

A Nation in Crisis and The Church's Call to Repentance

- There is a dangerous crisis of moral and political leadership at the highest levels of our government and in our churches in the United States.
- The soul of the nation and the integrity of faith are now at stake.

A Nation in Crisis and The Church's Call to Repentance (2 Chronicles 7:14)

- Now is the time to:
 - Lament
 - Confess
 - And repent
- And return to Jesus Christ

Jesus is Lord.

- Jesus is Lord is our foundational confession.
- No other authority is absolute.
- Our first loyalty is to Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 6:10)
- Our faith is personal but never private.

Questions:

- Who is Jesus Christ for us today?
- What does our loyalty to Christ, as disciples, require at this moment in our history?

Six Affirmations of Belief and the Resulting Rejections of Practices

- Our “Yes” is the foundation for our “No.”
- What we confess as our faith leads to what we confront.

I. We Believe

- Genesis 1:26-28 NKJV -- Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

I. We Believe

■ **Genesis 1:26-28 NKJV** *continued*
So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply;

I. We Believe

■ **Genesis 1:26-28 NKJV** *continued*
...fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
■ Each human being is made in God's image and likeness .

I. We Believe

■ That image and likeness confers a divinely decreed dignity, worth, and God-given equality to all of us as children of the one God who is the Creator of all things.

I. We Believe

- Racial bigotry is a brutal denial of the image of God (the imago dei) in some of the children of God.
- Our participation in the global community of Christ absolutely prevents any toleration of racial bigotry.

I. We Believe

- Racial justice and healing are biblical and theological issues for us, and are central to the mission of the body of Christ in the world.

I. We Believe

- We give thanks for the prophetic role of the historic black churches in America when they have called for a more faithful gospel.

Therefore, We Reject
■ the resurgence of white nationalism and racism in our nation on many fronts, including the highest levels of political leadership.

Therefore, We Reject
■ as followers of Jesus, the use of racial bigotry for political gain that we have seen. In the face of such bigotry, silence is complicity.

Therefore, We Reject
■ In particular, white supremacy and commit ourselves to help dismantle the systems and structures that perpetuate white preference and advantage.

➤ **Therefore,**

- any doctrines or political strategies that use racist resentments, fears, or language must be named as public sin—one that goes back to the foundation of our nation and lingers on.

➤ **Therefore,**

- Racial bigotry must be antithetical for those belonging to the body of Christ, because it denies the truth of the gospel we profess.

➤ **II. We Believe**

- Galatians 3:28
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

II. We Believe

- We are one Body.
- In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class.

II. We Believe

- The Body of Christ, where those great human divisions are to be overcome, is meant to be an example for the rest of society.

II. We Believe

- When we fail to overcome these oppressive obstacles, and even perpetuate them, we have failed in our vocation to the world—to proclaim and live the reconciling gospel of Christ.

Therefore, We Reject

- Misogyny, the mistreatment, violent abuse, sexual harassment, and assault of women that has been further revealed in our culture and politics, including our churches, and the oppression of any other child of God.

Therefore,

- We lament when such practices seem publicly ignored, and thus privately condoned, by those in high positions of leadership.
- We stand for the respect, protection, and affirmation of women in our families, communities, workplaces, politics, and churches.

Therefore,

- We support the courageous truth-telling voices of women, who have helped the nation recognize these abuses. We confess sexism as a sin, requiring our repentance and resistance.

III. We Believe

► **Matthew 25: 31-46** - "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another,

Matthew 25: 31-46

as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Matthew 25: 31-46

for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

Matthew 25: 31-46

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

Matthew 25: 31-46

And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

Matthew 25: 31-46

for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

Matthew 25: 31-46

“Then they also will answer ⁴⁵Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these,

Matthew 25: 31-46

you did not do *it* to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

III. We Believe

- how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ Himself.
- God calls us to protect and seek justice for those who are poor and vulnerable, and our treatment of people who are “oppressed,” “strangers,” “outsiders,” or otherwise considered “marginal” is a test of our relationship to God, who made us all equal in divine dignity and love.

III. We Believe

- Our proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ is at stake in our solidarity with the most vulnerable.
- If our gospel is not “good news to the poor,” it is not the gospel of Jesus Christ (Luke 4:18).

Luke 4:18

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the
brokenhearted; To proclaim liberty
to the captives and recovery of
sight to the blind, to set at liberty
those who are oppressed;

Therefore, We Reject

- the language and policies of political leaders who would debase and abandon the most vulnerable children of God.

► We strongly deplore the growing attacks on immigrants and refugees, who are being made into cultural and political targets, and we need to remind our churches that God makes the treatment of the "strangers" among us a test of faith (Leviticus 19:33-34).

Leviticus 19:33-34
'And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. ³⁴The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

► We won't accept the neglect of the well-being of low-income families and children, and we will resist repeated attempts to deny health care to those who most need it.
► We confess our growing national sin of putting the rich over the poor.

► We reject the immoral logic of cutting services and programs for the poor while cutting taxes for the rich. Budgets are moral documents.

► We commit ourselves to opposing and reversing those policies and finding solutions that reflect the wisdom of people from different political parties and philosophies to seek the common good.

► Protecting the poor is a central commitment of Christian discipleship, to which 2,000 verses in the Bible attest.

IV. We Believe

► that t is morally central to our personal and public lives. T - t is central to the prophetic biblical tradition, whose vocation includes speaking the Word of God into their societies and speaking the truth to power.

IV. We Believe

- ▶ A commitment to speaking truth, the ninth commandment of the Decalogue, "You shall not bear f_____ w_____" (Exodus 20:16), is foundational to shared trust in society.

IV. We Believe

- ▶ that f_____ can enslave us, but Jesus promises, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you f_____." (John 8:32).
- ▶ The s_____ and r_____ for truth is crucial to anyone who follows Christ.

Therefore, We Reject

- ▶ the practice and pattern of lying that is invading our p_____ and c_____ life. Politicians, like the rest of us, are h_____, f_____, s_____, and m_____.

► But when p_____ l_____ becomes so persistent that it deliberately tries to change facts for i_____, p_____ or p_____ gain, the public accountability to truth is undermined.

► The regular purveying of falsehoods and consistent lying by the nation's highest leaders can change the m_____, e_____ within a culture, the a_____ for a civil society, and even the b_____ of families and children.

► The n_____ of l_____ presents a profound moral danger to the fabric of society. In the face of lies that bring darkness, Jesus is our t_____ and our l_____.
