

YOU CAN'T BE A RACIST "AND" A CHRISTIAN. THEY ARE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE.

Christ always existed as God. John 1:1 "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." "The beginning" is a reference to the time before the universe. Christ, the Word existed as God from the beginning. Christ is the Word through whom all things in the universe came to be. Christ as God he is omniscient, which means he knows all things.

This Word "emptied himself and became man," became an unborn child---- Did he empty himself of all knowledge? If he did not empty himself of all knowledge then can you imagine a two-month-old baby speaking several languages? No this would not be a gifted child this would be a monster. As far as we know Jesus did not know how to speak several languages when he was two months old. We believe Jesus emptied himself of all God's knowledge and became just like us in ALL things, just like the bible says, in all things but sin. This suggests that Jesus had to learn things about himself and the world much like you and I have to learn about ourselves and the world we live in. Jesus did not know how to speak until he heard others speaking and appropriated a language just as you and I do. Jesus did not know how to build furniture until his father taught him. Jesus did not know anything about the Jewish bible until the rabbis and his parents taught him. Jesus grew in knowledge as he grew up. Jesus did not know everything while he was on earth as God does because remember the bible says "He emptied himself and became like us in all things, that is "all things but sin."

If what I have said so far is true then it follows that what Jesus knew of the world was what the society of the day and individual people taught him. So if he heard negative things about groups of people he probably believed them.

The reason I mention this is because in our Gospel story today we actually find Jesus learning something about prejudice. Prejudice and hate have been in the news recently which makes this Gospel even more relevant.

Jesus grew up in an environment where prejudice and ignorance and discrimination were the rule of the day. A foreign woman approaches Jesus and speaks to him in today's Gospel. The first strike against the woman is that she is a woman. Women had no rights at the time---legally nor religiously. A man could not speak to a woman in public even if she were his wife. In Jewish culture, women were valued only for their childbearing and mothering skills. Men had the authority to divorce them at will for any reason, or for no reason at all. A woman had no such right. A woman was not allowed to read from the Scriptures and was not counted as a member of the congregation. Only if you understand the prejudice against women at the time can you understand how shocking this scene would have been to people in the first century. The second strike against this woman is that she was a Canaanite, a foreigner. Jews considered Canaanites to be like dogs and they did not use the word "dog" in terms of a "household pet".

The third strike against her is that she would not be of the Jewish religion.

You see now why the whole interaction here between the woman and Jesus is significant. You can assume that Jesus has learned about women and Canaanites and people of other religions from the world in which he was raised. He enters this scene with a misunderstanding of who women and foreigners and people of other religions are. All Jesus does know is what he has been told by others. Jesus' immediate reaction is to ignore the woman because to acknowledge her existence would have meant Jesus was recognizing her as human. But something must not have set right in Jesus' spirit because he is moved to speak to the woman. Stories of Jesus' healings were all about and this woman's daughter is sick. Jesus responds, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." That was not what the woman was hoping for. But she would not be denied. She came and knelt before Jesus. "Lord, help me!" she said.

And here we see Jesus simply reflecting the culture of his time. Others have taught Jesus that Canaanites are dogs and so he simply says it out loud. "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." Jesus is the student here. Jesus is learning something and in so doing is teaching us something about prejudice. "Yes it is Lord," she answered somewhat defiantly. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

I cannot tell you how much I admire this woman. She had a daughter that needed healing and she would do anything at all to save her. She was a fighter. She was going to gain both Jesus' respect for herself as well as healing for her daughter by answering Him as if she were the equal of any man in the territory. Don't you admire her? She was bright; she was articulate, and she stood up for her beliefs.

I say I admire her, but it is evident that Jesus admires her too. When she had so superbly replied to what could be taken as an insult, Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

This whole scene was revolutionary. It was subversive of the whole Jewish society at the time. Jesus is breaking down the walls that divide people based on gender, nationality, race and religion. When the bible said that Jesus "humbled himself and took the form of a man" we can see how far that humility went in this bible passage. Jesus had learned the common prejudice of the day and was humble enough to learn that those prejudices were all wrong. Jesus set a whole new standard for human beings to interact with one another. Jesus saw all men and women as being God's children and as such taught us not to just respect one another, but more, to love one another.

So what do I have to say about all the Christian Crosses decorating the outfits the Ku Klux Klan in Charlottesville, Virginia last week?

Jesus would be ashamed of them. You can't be a follower of Jesus and a white supremacist or a Nazi at the same time.

God created one family, the family of man. God expects everyone to get along as members of that one family. God expects us to love everyone especially our enemies.