

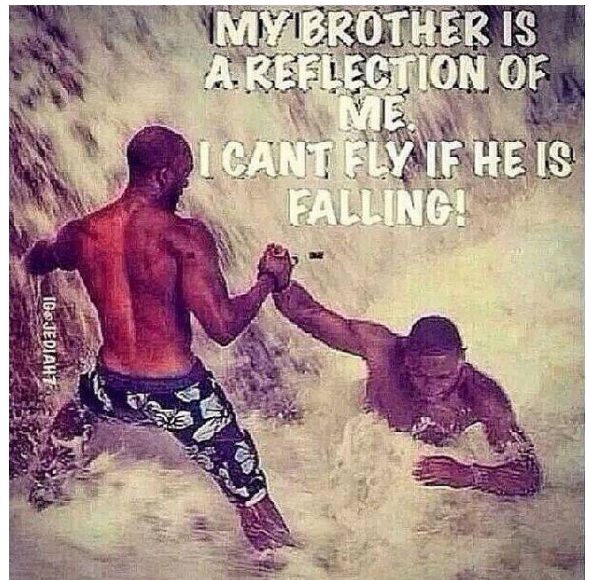
25<sup>th</sup> Oct Reflection - final Sunday in Black History Month

1 Corinthians 12 v 1-26 Matthew 20 v 26-28

## 'I am because of the community's wellbeing.'

This phrase is just one of the key themes in all Black Theology.

Jesus puts it in terms of radical love and service 'Love your neighbour as yourself', 'Love one another as I have loved you.' (John Chapter 13) Love did not remain a statement but was demonstrated in action in his concern for the poor and excluded. He challenged those who held political power and religious authority as to how they actually used their power to maintain justice for *all*.



The common heritage of most African Caribbean Black people has been suffering- through an history of slavery, colonialism and poverty linked to world trade. These facts leave all White Christians with the need to consider carefully how they enact love and do not just speak it. In both past and recent history many White people who claimed to be followers of Christ actively participated in slavery, encouraged or stood by and watched lynching's and supported apartheid.

In the Old Testament we read 'Am I my brother's keeper?' a reply by Cain to God after he had murdered his brother Abel. The response to this question for us should be **we are** our 'brother's and sisters' keepers. Using the imagery of the body as Christian community, St Paul states "'If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honoured, all the parts are glad.'" (See 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 v 1-26)

Racism is more than acts of violence. Racism is based on patterns of relating destructively such as overlooking others, belittling others, justifying or collaborating in dominating others, or encouraging the hardening of boundaries between different groups of people.

Do take time to reflect and act on a key question that Black theologians ask us '**Are we actively liberating the broken hearted, the wounded, the outcast, the marginalised, the oppressed and those surviving in structural poverty? For if one part of the body suffers, we all do.**'

Revd Becky

### For further reading :

James Cone was one of the founding thinkers and activists in Black theology. His writing is both insightful and challenging. *Christ and the Lynching Tree* is one example of his work.

Anthony Reddie is a modern Black Theologian. His most recent book, *Is God colour blind?* explores why Black lives matter.

**A prayer written during the Black Lives Matter Campaign in July 2020.**

**A PRAYER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE**  
@BLACKHOUSEINTHECITY

WHEN OUR EYES DO NOT SEE THE GRAVITY OF THIS,  
SHAKE US FROM OUR SLUMBER AND OPEN OUR EYES, O LORD.  
WHEN OUT OF FEAR, WE ARE SCARED INTO INACTION,  
GIVE US A SPIRIT OF BRAVERY, O LORD.  
WHEN WE TRY OUR BEST BUT SAY THE WRONG THINGS,  
GIVE US A SPIRIT OF HUMILITY, O LORD.  
WHEN THE CHAOS OF THIS DIES DOWN,  
GIVE US A LASTING SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY, O LORD.  
WHEN IT BECOMES EASIER TO POINT FINGERS OUTWARD,  
HELP US TO EXAMINE OUR OWN HEARTS, O LORD.

GOD OF TRUTH, IN YOUR WISDOM, ENLIGHTEN US.  
GOD OF LOVE, IN YOUR MERCY, FORGIVE US.  
GOD OF HOPE, IN YOUR KINDNESS, HEAL US.  
CREATOR OF ALL PEOPLE, IN YOUR GENEROSITY, GUIDE US.

RACISM BREAKS YOUR HEART, BREAK MY HEART  
FOR WHAT BREAKS YOURS, O LORD.

## We'll understand it better by and by – a reflection on the hymn by MS

Charles Albert Tindley (1851 - 1933) was born in Maryland, the son of a slave, though his mother was free. His mother died when he was very young, and his aunt took him in to preserve his freedom. Nevertheless he had to work to help keep that family, at the same time as his father hired him out "wherever he could place me". He taught himself to read and went on educating himself throughout his life; eventually he even wrote a hymn in Arabic. He married at 17, and had eight children, some of whom assisted with the publication of his hymns.

He studied by correspondence course to become a Methodist Minister. By all accounts he was a captivating preacher who also took an active role in the betterment of the people in the community. In his last church, from 1924 onwards, there were 10,000 people on the membership roll. He published his hymns and songs in books called *Soul echoes* and *New songs of Paradise*.

His most-published hymn is *Nothing between my soul and the Saviour*; the hymn printed below is the second most popular, appearing in 82 hymnals. It was written in 1905. This is a sort of tidied-up version, because in performance various lines and phrases are repeated all over the place. The haphazard use of capitals is as published. You can find it and listen to it on YouTube: type in the first line and choose the version timed at 5'14".

As a well brought up WASP (White Anglo Saxon Privileged) chorister I find that style of worship very difficult to appreciate, with people jiggling around, clapping and shouting out. But then I don't have African roots and none one of my relatives were slaves. This is Afro-American history and we should know about it. There is still a big gulf between cultures, which we pray will be bridged - by and by.

We are often tossed and driv'n  
On the restless sea of time.  
Sombre skies and howling tempests  
oft succeed a bright sunshine.  
In that land of perfect day,  
When the mists have rolled away,  
We will understand it better by and by.  
REFRAIN: *By and by when the morning comes,  
When the saints of God are gathered home,  
We will tell the story how we've overcome;  
For we'll understand it better by and by.*

We are often destitute  
of the things that life demands.  
Want of food and want of shelter,  
thirsty hills and barren lands.  
We are trusting in the Lord,  
and according to his Word  
We will understand it better by and by.  
REFRAIN

Trials dark on every hand,  
And we cannot understand,  
All the ways that God would lead us  
to that blessed Promised Land.  
But he guides us with his eye  
and we'll follow till we die,  
For we'll understand it better by and by.  
REFRAIN

Temptations, hidden snares  
Often take us unawares,  
And our hearts are made to bleed  
for some thoughtless word or deed.  
And we wonder why the test  
When we try to do our best  
But we'll understand it better by and by.