

The old adage goes,

“Give a man a fish, he will eat for a day; teach a man to fish, he will eat for a lifetime.”

While this statement rings true, John Perkins has rightfully noted, we also have to ask,
“who owns the pond?”

Beyond that, even more questions arise

What if the pond is polluted?

What if this pond you have access to is never restocked with fish?

What if a wall is built to restrict access to the pond?

Consistent access to the pond is necessary

Without access to the pond, the ability to fish is of no use

We have consistent access to Christ—all of us!

- *Galatians 3:28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*
- *Colossians 3:11 In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!*
- *Ephesians 2:14 For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.*
- *Romans 2:11 For God shows no partiality.*
- *Leviticus 19:33-34 “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”*
- *John 13:16 “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.”*

There are a multitude of stories in scripture in which Jesus honors the one considered “other” by many

- Woman at the well
- Woman caught in adultery
- Children are welcomed
- Women travel with Jesus as disciples
- Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan—in which the hated Samaritan is the good neighbor
- Jesus touches the leper and heals him
- The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized by Philip

Yet, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King,

“We must face the fact that in America, the church is still the most segregated major institution in America. At 11:00 on Sunday morning when we stand and sing and Christ has no east or west, we stand at the most segregated hour in this nation. This is tragic.”

We, the church have work to do

We must extend the welcome of Jesus to all people

About 20 years ago I attended a retreat in which one of the leaders was from South Africa

She was a white female pastor who had grown up under apartheid and accepted it as good

Prior to leaving South Africa for respite, she worked tirelessly to bring about the end of apartheid

I asked her one day what made her change her views on apartheid

She said that it was when she learned that her black peers had something to teach her

Seeing that fellow black ministers had truth to teach her, she could no longer deny their equality

In Christ, we all have access to God

In the story of the woman at the well in John 4—Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman

Samaritans were despised by the Israelites for having intermarried with the foreigners
Jesus and the woman talk about true worship and the place of true worship

Is it on the mountain or in Jerusalem?

Jesus said the time is coming when you will worship in neither place

Jesus said, *“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:23-24 NRSV*

In Acts, the Judaizers wrestle with Peter and Paul who insist the Gentiles have access to God

Not only do they have direct access, but they don't have to submit to Jewish rituals
All people can come to God directly—Jew and everyone who is not a Jew—everybody!

And that means EVERYBODY!!

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:14-17 NRSV