

**ONENESS 2021 COG DELMARVA REGION PRAYER CONFERENCE**

**Pastor Rae Orozco**

*This is a sermon transcript from a message given to the Church of God Delmarva Region at the 2021 Prayer Conference. Portions of this message can be found in the book, soon to be released by Pathway Press, entitled, He Had To Go There: The Multi-Cultural Mandate.*

-  
**INTRODUCTION:** First, I want to thank you to Bishop Stan and Sister Teresa Holder for this invitation. A salute to Bishop Bill Lee – a man of God I greatly esteem and am honored to call my friend. And, a shout-out to my many dear friends and cohorts in this region. I rejoiced at the opportunity to affirm principles I’m confident you already believe in. Because, I am certain, God has specifically called Church of God – and especially this Region - - *to be a bold uniter of people – and ambassadors of God’s Kingdom to the world.*

-  
**STORY:** *The heat in Southern Arizona had been especially blistering one summer. When the monsoon storm clouds finally began to form, a collective sigh of relief was almost audible from desert dwelling inhabitants of the city of Tucson. As clouds burst, and refreshing rain began to pour from the heavens, my two-year old daughter and I ran out to the covered porch to enjoy the downpour together. Just thirty minutes later, the furious storm dissipated, leaving the thirsty dry soil drenched, arroyos running like rivers, and the outside temperature livable. My little one, our third child, and a late-in-life blessing, asked to play in the mud. My parenting style at this season of my life had devolved into more of a grandparenting permissiveness, so I waved her on to jump in the puddles and squish about in the muck. She ended up sitting in brown goo, gleefully squeezing and shaping a muddy masterpiece between her chubby fingers. When finished, she proudly held up two globs and declared: “Mommy and Daddy!”. “Beautiful!” I congratulated, “And, I do see a remarkable resemblance to your Dad!”.*

Our theme for this conference is:

*Acts 17:26 From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth.*

**ANIMATED DIRT**

The first man and women were created in God’s image and by God’s own hands out of the mud puddles of the earth. God gave them a name: *Adam*, the root meaning red or ruddy as the earth. Genesis 2:7 provides an unmistakable and intentional word-play:

*“Then the Lord God formed a man (Adam) from the dust of the ground (Adamah) and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” Genesis 2:7 [NIV]*

Since the Hebrew word for earth is “*Adamah*”, God called mankind, “*Adam*”, because we were drawn from the rich red dust of the ground. This means literally *we are all just highly functioning dirt!* We may be dirt from Africa, Asia, Mexico or England, but we’re still just dirt from the same mud puddle! We originate from dust and to dust we return. Our only intrinsic value is that God breathed into us making us living souls. *We are dirt animated by His Holy Spirit.*

STORY: *A wealthy older lady booked a room at a posh New York hotel. She headed for her room and waited at the lobby elevator. When the elevator doors opened, two African American men were in the elevator, coming up from the basement parking. She hesitated, eyeing the tall men dressed in jeans and hoodies, and though still conflicted, she nervously stepped in, and turned toward the closing elevator door. Obviously anxious, she fidgeted with her pearls and shifting her weight, feeling as though she'd never arrive at her floor. From behind her, a deep voice instructed in a whispered tone, "Lady, hit the floor." Horrified, she was paralyzed in fear. He spoke again, but more emphatically, "Lady, press the floor!" Now overcome by terror, she threw up her purse and hit the ground, sprawling on the elevator floor. There was momentary silence above her and then muffled giggles. Finally, the men said, "Lady, you need to press the button your floor is on!" They helped her back to her feet and she pressed the button to her floor, red faced and gripping her purse in embarrassment as the elevator rose. As soon as she exited the elevator, the men broke into hysterical laughter that echoed up the elevator shaft as they rose to the penthouse suite. Later that evening, a hotel bellman arrived at the woman's room holding several dozen roses. A tag attached read, "Madame, we are sorry you were frightened in the elevator, but thank you for the best laugh we'd had in a year!" Signed, Eddie Murphy and Michael Jordan.*

### THE S(k)IN ISSUE

It is in our sin-DNA to rename and reframe others in a way that lessens their God-given dignity and value. It occurs when one clump of clay assumes superiority over another clump of clay. Almost unconsciously and automatically, we assess and evaluate people based on skin color, age, gender, how they talk, walk, sing, vote, smell, dress, tattoo, pierce and even what they eat! We automatically categorize; we label and rank, separate and segregate. We believe erroneous things:

Asians are smart but drive really bad.

Mexicans are lazy and possibly "illegal".

The Irish drink and fight.

Italians are definitely all in the mafia. (I've watched Godfather 1,2 3)

Blacks are violent but sure can sing, dance and jump.

Whites are all racist. *All white ladies with blonde hair are "Karens"*

Men are basically Jerks.

Women are emotionally fragile and should never lead. (Wink, wink.)

We may not be so bold as to say these things out loud. Yet, these notions become deeply embedded into our belief systems. False pretenses are furthered, misconceptions enabled, baseless fears fueled, and spiteful divisions perpetuated.

\*We have a sin issue that we've disguised as a skin issue. It's called prejudging, which is simply *prejudice*. Prejudging because of race, is *racism*. But, more importantly, it is sin.

It's not culture issues, language issues, race or gender issues that cause division – It's our sin issue! And, it's about time we stopped putting lipstick on this pig and call it what it truly is: It's foul smelling, rotting, filthy Sin. SIN - that is an offense to God! SIN – that has crushed hearts and bodies. SIN – that still side-lines millions from front-row ministry and opportunity. SIN- that limits our influence and corrupts our call.

*Prejudice, sexism, racism are sin.* Sins that keeps us from becoming one.

When sin entered the world in Genesis 3:12-21, not only was mankind's relationship with God corrupted - the oneness and partnership between Adam and Eve degenerated in blaming, reframing and domination. Sin broke the oneness God created. Sin broke the synergy. Sin broke the partnership and co-regency.

But the Good News is: *What sin corrupted, Jesus came to restore!*

### **KINGDOM COMPLEXION**

From the start to its conclusion, Jesus' earthly ministry consistently sought out and gathered in those from other cultures, as well as the young and the elderly, the poor and the rich, the healthy and the infirmed, the sinner and the Pharisee. *Inclusivity and diversity were the trademarks of Christ's Kingdom.*

Jesus boldly declared His ministry mission was to cross over the boundaries of sin, prejudice, hopelessness and oppression, to bring salvation, dignity and freedom in Luke 4:18-19 [NIV], *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

In every pathway, hillside, riverbank, and field; in every hut, house, courtyard, synagogue or Temple, Jesus consistently extended His love and grace to those of every color, culture, background or creed. He confounded the elite and delighted the lowly. He would meet a Pharisee in secret, call a thief out of a tree, and talk with a sinful Samaritan woman at a well. *The mission was to unite people – all people – in His love.*

>Even Christ's genealogy speaks of divine inclusion

>His birth invited the lowliest and the kingly into His presence

<His death on the cross was broadcasted in the three most common languages of the world, declaring....

*"... Your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God...."* Revelation 5:9-10 [NLT]

>Christ's final words to His disciples focused on reaching out to the ethnicities of the world. Matthew 28:19a [NLT] *"Go and make disciples of all the nations..."*

Acts 1:8 [NLT] *"And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

At Pentecost, in Acts 2, the church was birthed in a multi-ethnic incubator as people from all nations received Christ and were filled with the Spirit.

THE COMPLEXION OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS MULTI-TONED AND MULTI-ETHNIC Paul says in Ephesians 2:13-19 [NIV]:

*“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.....*

*Verse 19. .... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household...”*

### **CAUTION TAPE**

**STORY:** *My family moved into a house that required my two daughters to share a room. My eldest daughter, Ester, was in her early teens, whereas my youngest, Gigi, was eight years her junior, and a very precocious preschooler. Both girls were excited about sharing their big room, planning the details of the décor and organization together. Boundaries of respect regarding personal space and property were agreed upon. Until one day we heard a riotous uproar coming from the girls’ room. Ester was yelling and Gigi was screeching. Fearful some horrible intruder had climbed through the window to harm our daughters, my husband and I dashed across the house. Instead, there was Gigi, her face painted brightly with Ester’s new makeup, along with the floor, rug, walls and bedspreads. Ester was furious at the violation. My husband and I suppressed giggles, as we comforted our distressed teenager and disciplined our preschooler. The importance of respect was reemphasized to both. But the very next day, Gigi found it utterly impossible to honor the invisible boundaries that kept her from her sister’s belongings. This time, it was Ester’s nail polish that covered the room. Ester’s frustration boiled over, and Gigi’s toys became the sad victims of Ester’s rage. The situation continued for days despite our parental threats, bribes and pleading. Our little Gigi had a strong sense of entitlement even the sternest discipline wasn’t budging. We had to do something for the sake of our family’s peace and came up with a plan to separate the girls in a more visible way. Buying bright yellow “caution” tape, we strung it through the middle of the room, dividing the two girls’ beds and belongings. The beautiful space became marred by the crude partition but created a visible boundary that helped the girls recognize one another’s personal space. Gigi was to keep to her own side and never cross the yellow tape; Ester would do the same. So finally, the two arrived at a passable way of living together. But they lost the joy and camaraderie of their sisterhood for a long time.*

Dr Martin Luther King said, “11am on Sunday is the most segregated time of the week.” He was right then and more than 50 years later, sadly he’s still right.

*The Church is segregated on Sunday morning for the same reasons my girls were.*

It is easier to divide up and keep to our own, rather than to work out our differences and show deference, fairness and inclusion. It’s easier not to share the pew, the platform, publisher, the budget and the boardroom.

It is easier to keep things quiet and neat than to endure the messy business of making room for cultural uniqueness and ethnic expression in our services and ministries.

*I understand!* I pastored a multi-cultural and multi-lingual church for over 13 years. It was messy! Service start time concepts varied from 5 minutes before to 30 minutes later, depending on culture. Coming to common understandings of the necessity of advanced scheduling, building capacities, clean-up, and watching of children, were a constant test in patience and perseverance. It was, at times - chaotic. It would have been easier to minister singularly to those who looked like me, acted like me, worshipped like me and understood the importance of facility requests. It's easier – but it's not God, nor is it Godly!

For we have traded the synergy of a diverse and dynamic brotherhood for an uneasy and graceless family peace. The division has been necessary only because of our own spiritual immaturity. But it's time for the church to grow up and learn to share.

It's time we take down the ugly caution tape of division that mars the beauty of God's House and the power of our missional purpose. *It's time for Oneness!*

The Apostle Paul give us some steps....

*2 Corinthians 5:16-20 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. ...Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors...NIV*

Let's unpack this together: Paul tells us first that,

1. ONENESS REQUIRES NEW LENSES

*"So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view." 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 [NIV]*

According to Paul our view or perspective of others has been marred. A worldly perspective has skewed and stained our ability to see people in the way God sees them. We need new lenses.

STORY: *I'm getting older. My eyes are not as keen as they used to be. My children kept prompting me to go to the optometrist for glasses, but I resisted, reluctant to surrender my last remnant of youthfulness to the inevitable granny bifocals. One day, I spied dear old friends across the conference hall I'd been speaking at. Eager to reconnect, I yelled out their names and waved but they didn't respond. Somewhat irked by their lack of enthusiasm in seeing me, I moved through the crowd toward them. "Mary and Don, it has been such a long time since I've seen you!" I exclaimed and slowly made my way to them. They did not reciprocate my excitement but instead looked at each and then to those around them. Finally, with arms outstretched, I joyfully embraced them both. They were awkwardly stiff, so I pulled away a bit confused. Only when I was three feet from their faces did I realize these individuals were not my friends, Mary and Don. I made the appointment for glasses.*

Having a worldly point of view of others is simply prejudging people according to a worldly or cultural standard. We all have a propensity for prejudging and segregating into our comfortable racial or cultural cliques. Often, because it's just easier to minister to and hang out with people who understand us, act like us, dress like us, eat like us, talk like us, and worship like us! But the church can no longer acquiesce to worldly culture, patterns or perspectives because we are not of this world. *In God's Kingdom, color lines have been washed away by the blood of Jesus!*

Therefore, we must first accept we haven't viewed things as God does, repent from worldly perspectives and take off the lenses stained by personal hurts, fears, and traditions. Let's ask God for new lenses – a view that will help us see people as Jesus.

## 2. ONENESS STARTS WITH ONE

*“.... And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. “*

Unity conferences and racial reconciliation gatherings have taken place globally over the years. Preachers have preached and position papers written. Though inspiring, we must admit too little has actually been accomplished in conquering the territory of prejudice and division held by the devil for generations.

-  
That is because becoming “one” starts with “the one” – It starts with me. It starts with you. We cannot assuage our consciences by simply attending a kum-by-ya conference! It takes more than that to pull down this stronghold. *But it can start with just one!*

Too long we've waited for someone else to get the “Oneness” going –The State Bishop, the General Overseer, the Big Church pastor, etc

But “Oneness” is a personal job. Confronting prejudice and racism is not the job of the courts, the congress or the president. Its the church's job! Jesus committed to His Church the message of equality, inclusion, equity, and oneness. \*We still have racism in our streets, because we have still have racism in the church!

-  
Equality, justice and Oneness won't “Happen in the White House until it happens in the Church House”, Dr. Tony Evans says. \*But it can't happen in the church house until it happens in our own house. “It's me , it's me, it's me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer – not my brother or my sister, but it's me oh Lord!”

STORY: *\*Latino pastor and family persecuted in Mexico by Catholics* The personal repentance and reconciliation from a Catholic Priest healed transformed his heart, enabling him to become a bridge to Catholic peoples. Now he is a catalyst in his city for relationship with priests in the region.

The principle is this: before it can happen through me it must happen in me.

-

We must ask ourselves: have I done an honest inventory of our biases? Am I guilty of prejudice? Have I kept to my own kind because of being wounded by inequity? Have I muted my prophetic tongue against prejudice because I've been intimidated by a lack of knowledge of cultural competence? If so, what am I going to do about it? How can I take initiative in my community?  
*"He has committed his message of reconciliation to me. It is my job*

### 3. ONENESS REQUIRES AMBASSADORS

*Verse 20.....We are therefore Christ's ambassadors...*

What is an ambassador? The representative of another government, kingdom and culture. An Ambassador sets up an embassy in a foreign culture where people can find refuge and gain citizenship to another country.

If we allow ourselves to be identified with or take on the trappings of worldly culture how can we be an embassy for the Kingdom of God?

*You are an ambassador of the Kingdom of God!* You are not an ambassador for your people group, your race, your culture, your political party, or even your nation. You and I first and foremost represent Jesus and His Kingdom. We might look different, talk different, eat different, wear different things, but we are one in mission and purpose, united as ambassadors. The Kingdom we together represent supercedes Latino, Black, White or Asian Cultures. It prevails and overrules the Democratic or Republican Parties, because our party is the *Jesus Party*. And that party trumps poverty culture, greed culture, violence culture. It disrupts racism, sexism, perversion, corruption and deception. Christ's Kingdom Culture surpasses, displaces and transcends them all!

Therefore, we, the Church, are not called to be conformed to the world but transformed and transformative. Because, ultimately, *We are not OF this world* – we are all foreigners and aliens. Whether, black, white or brown, we belong to and live by another culture: Kingdom Culture. That culture is preeminent, and that is what *makes us one*.

WE ARE ONE IN FAITH. WE ARE ONE IN PURPOSE. WE ARE ONE IN MANDATE; ONE IN MISSION. WE ARE ONE IN KINGDOM CULTURE. Therefore, WE ARE ONE!