

**Melia Mullins: 8/4/20**

### **Opening a Window to True Reconciliation**

How does one reconcile themselves to the “other?” The first step might reflexively urge you to stop labeling them as “other.” Which I agree, is an important stop on the map to Heaven on Earth. But I would suggest that is not the first pit stop in the path to harmony within the Kingdom.

I believe the first step was clearly outlined in the Gospels but we tend to ignore Jesus’ most appallingly difficult instructions.

“You hypocrite! First, remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye.” Matthew 7:25

I think humans just love to jump to the second part because we love to take our job as Christian hall monitors quite seriously. If we don’t remind people of how they’ve stepped out of the line how might they get to heaven?

But, what if we first acknowledged our own failings? What if we looked deeply and critically at ourselves, our jobs, and our generation? What if we did our best to examine how our status in the world affects those around us? What if we sat quietly and listened to what OTHER people perceive as a plank?

Jesus didn’t say this knowing that you know that you have a plank eye. He said it so that you might realize that somehow you have missed this massive piece of lumber in your eye.

I believe the next step, after sitting in discomfort, is addressing ones true loyalties. If my loyalty is to God’s Kingdom, I don’t so much worry about my societal status, checkbook, political affiliation, social media following, and perceived righteousness.

My dedication is to God and his plans to reconcile the world. If I am striving after him I’m not concerned with political conspiracy and fear, media’s fright entertainment, nor am I obsessed with mindless, numbing self-centered, apathetic leisure.

On this map to reconciliation, we should look a lot more like Isaiah and Micah.

“The Lord has given me a strong warning not to think like everyone else does. He said, “Don’t call everything a conspiracy, like they do, and don’t live in dread of what frightens them. Make the Lord of Heaven’s Armies holy in your life. He is the one you should fear. He is the one who should make you tremble. He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.” Isaiah 8:11-14 NLT

This plan to God's kingdom is just a sketch and is not a straight, easy. It's not without stumbling blocks. As Isaiah said above, if there are going to be stumbling blocks, I would so much rather Jesus being the thing one would stumble upon. Jesus is all love, kindness, and sacrifice. It's so much harder to stumble on that than when people stumble upon my own implicit and explicit biases.

So let's work as a people toward openness, acceptance and hard, thoughtful and quiet conversations so that one day, in the future, we can eliminate "other" language. But never before we accept our own roles without creating the stumbling blocks, distance, and broken systems.