

Freedom from Racism Sunday July 5, 2015  
Rev. Kyle Caudle, First Baptist Church on Fifth, Winston-Salem, NC

*In Luke's Gospel Jesus stands up in the synagogue and reads from the prophet Isaiah--publicly proclaiming his mission and calling:*

*"the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*On this weekend where we celebrate the freedoms we so dearly love as Americans--we are also mindful that while we are free, we may also still be captive. The recent murders of 9 African American Christians at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC reminds us that racism still holds us captive. Since that evil event that left 9 of God's children dead, we have also heard that there have been fires at 7 African American churches--at least two have been deemed arson.*

*The sin of racism holds us all captive: whether you are a victim, a bystander, or a perpetrator. We are all bound together; we must be set free together. For we are not truly free until **all** are truly free. As Christians, we believe Jesus can free us from racism: "for if the Son has set you free, you will be free indeed." Lord, we need liberation!*

*Many churches across racial and denominational lines are standing together in solidarity today to proclaim "freedom from racism" Sunday. And so we join now in prayer to pray for this nation and for God's church, confessing our shared sin, but fully trusting that by the amazing grace of God we may soon see the day of the Lord's favor.*

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God of freedom,

We come before you this morning confessing that we have fallen short of your dream. Lord, we ask that you fill us with a love that casts out all fear and with the compassion to see your image in all people, regardless of color or status.

God, we know of your love for this world. We have experienced your love in our own lives; yet we so often fail to put that love into practice, to live out your love in this world.

But it is your love that continues to compel us to pray for your people:

-For the children in this nation and in this community who do not know where their next meal is coming from, for mothers and fathers wondering how to provide for their children and still have something left over, for teenagers who cannot see past the patterns of poverty and fail to dream of anything more

*Lord, help us to bring good news to the poor*

-For those imprisoned for petty crimes—many who are too poor to afford good legal counsel, for those whose criminal records haunt them like an unrelenting shadow—the majority of whom are African American men.

*Lord, we pray for release*

-For those held captive by the ideologies of hate, of prejudice, of racism.

*Lord, we pray for forgiveness and release*

-For those who are blind—blind to the suffering of others, too blind to see your image in all people, for those who are blind to systemic injustices too blinded by their privilege or comfort,

*Lord, help us to see.*

-For the millions upon millions who have been oppressed by the sin of racism, Lord we ask for you to set us free—victims, bystanders, and perpetrators alike—free us from the racism that has held us captive for far too long. That we may truly live into the freedom for which Christ has saved us.

*Lord, set us free.*

And all God's people say: Amen.