

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 1/12/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

A lot is said these days about racism. It's good when racism is called out and people are challenged to readjust their thinking and their comments about others. And these behaviors aren't just about race. They are about the many ways that we perceive others who aren't like ourselves, our group, or those we look at as acceptable.

Frederick Otto Hertz was a sociologist, economist, and historian of Austrian origin who served in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I. Later he was a professor at the University of Halle-Wittenberg in Saxony, Germany. When the Nazis overtook the University, he was dismissed but also labeled a Jew, Freemason, and pacifist for his publications on issues of race and nationality.

Hertz wrote, "At the heart of racism is the religious assertion that GOD made a creative mistake when HE brought some people into being." That's powerful! And it is worthwhile for all of us to consider. Any kind of prejudice, whether about race or any other form resulting in discrimination toward another group is a statement about GOD. Prejudice, as Hertz asserted, says that GOD was in error when creating certain people.

Moreover, when we look down on some people for whatever reason, we are claiming that the testimony of scripture is in error. *For GOD so loved the world that HE gave HIS one and only SON, that whoever believes in HIM shall not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16). With regard to prejudice, the keyword in that verse is "whoever." GOD's love in JESUS CHRIST is available to *whoever* believes, regardless of who they are. Bias toward others based on race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, or whatever reasons we may have challenge that this promise is available to all others because of their faith alone.

We tend to judge others because of what we have been taught or our discomfort with them being different from us. We begin with our personal feelings and then apply what we expect to be GOD's response. When we start with GOD and recognize that GOD created everyone as they are, we then should be led to see them as GOD does, as beloved children. JESUS said we would be known by our love. That love finds its source in the affirmation that all are created and loved by GOD. When we fail to show love to any of GOD's children, as Hertz said, we are saying that GOD made a mistake. I doubt any of us truly believe that.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey