

GROW: THE OBSTRUCTION IN ME!

Scripture used: [Isaiah 57:14-15 \(NRSV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

We have a special treat as a church this week. Pastor Hurmon saw a powerful sermon by Pastor George from University Presbyterian Church, who graciously agreed to give it to us as a part of our "Grow!" series. Pastor George shared his own story about working with two other churches in the Seattle area to better express God's heart for all through their three congregations, one predominately white, one predominately black, and one predominantly Asian. In this journey, he shared that he has come to better understand Jesus' words, "To those whom much is given, much is required" ([Luke 12:48](#)) and to overcome the fear of disadvantaging himself in order to advantage others. This kind of selfless act is natural for us with family, but we rarely manage to do it for others. But Jesus wants us to walk a different path. We are called to examine ourselves, and ask God to help remove the obstructions that keep us from following Jesus more closely. This is a scary and difficult process, but [Isaiah 57:14-15 \(NRSV\)](#) reminds us that God chose to become flesh, and to be beaten and crucified. He knows what it means to be crushed and humbled. He is the God of lows as much as the God of highs, and we walk with Him!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **The world is God's construction project, and the goal is reconciliation.** God is the Creator, and He became flesh to rescue His creation. He won the victory when Jesus conquered death and rose again. Now it is our responsibility as Jesus followers to live into this reality. This only happens when all the peoples of the world unite in peaceful worship of God the Redeemer. That is what the church family is all about, and that means all ethnicities, races, nations, and tribes. Everyone is invited to be a part of this gigantic project to construct a new heaven and new earth. We all yearn for this, but struggle to understand how we come together in practice. Only Jesus can do this!
- 2) **We must remove the obstructions to reconciliation.** God speaks to each of us individually, but it all starts with the same message: examine ourselves first. We each have our own obstructions to living out the message of Jesus. These obstructions keep us from fully participating in this grand construction project. These are the logs that Jesus tells us to remove from our own eye before telling others about the specks in their eyes. It is much easier to see the flaws of other people. Instead we must begin by turning inward, and that means asking God to search us, test us, and then lead us as it says in [Psalm 139:23-24 \(NRSV\)](#).
- 3) **God is with us in our lows, not just our highs.** God has given us all life, and blessed us with many comforts compared to other people around in the world and in history. In [Luke 12:48 \(NRSV\)](#) it reminds us that "much will be required" from "everyone to whom much has been given." This means we are called to disadvantage ourselves to serve and lift up others. Pastor George encouraged us to especially consider how this applies to ethnicity and socioeconomic privilege. Pastor George explained how hard that was for him, because he felt fear about his family's financial security. But then he was reminded that God is the only true security, and it is His perfect love that casts out fear!

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - People all over the world talk about unity, peace, and reconciliation. It is a common goal shared by almost everyone. But the secular values of the world are not enough to bring together such diverse people. It is our relationship with God the Father through His Risen Son that allows us to come together into a multiethnic, global church family. Do you feel hopeful or hopeless about positive change in the world? Where does your hope come from? How is God involved or not involved?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - God's construction project is to rescue this world and use His people to build a new heaven and a new earth. This massive effort is so intimidating. It is hard to know where to start. Pastor George suggests that we start with ourselves. We must look inward to find and root out these obstructions. What obstacles do you face to being an agent of healing in this world? What things have you learned from your family or media that are not helpful? Have you seen ways that God has helped you to choose a more redemptive path forward? How do you continue to walk that path?
- 3) **DO** - This week's affirmation is "I commit to self-examination and will pray [Psalm 139:23-24!](#)" This means asking God to reveal some uncomfortable truths, then to lead us beyond them to "the way everlasting."