

RESPONSE REFLECTION | *Prejudice Confession*

Who are the people you have labeled, judged, and excluded – whether intentionally or unintentionally – as unworthy of full belonging? Who do you subconsciously look down on because they don't tick the same boxes you do, or because they don't tick them in the way that you'd want them to?

Race, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender, able-bodiedness, politics, theology, age, marital status, immigration status, education...

Who do you look at and see “other” instead of “brother” (or sister)?

This isn't about pretending the categories don't exist. Our uniquenesses don't disappear – and they shouldn't – they just also shouldn't define our worth and our sense of belonging.

It isn't about pretending “I don't see colour, or gender.” It is about (forcefully) dismantling the hierarchy in our minds.

Maybe you look at a list like the one above, and you see yourself, see the dividing lines that have kept you feeling like you are on the outside.

Some of us have been made to feel less than – even around church – and we want you to hear us say, categorically that that's not how God sees you, and that we are sorry. What you have experienced is not the truth about who you are, the value you hold, your place in this world. And we want to do better.

But for many of us in the room, we are the ones who have been guilty of this, and we want to give some space to own that, this morning. To give ourselves an opportunity to name it – privately, with God – because naming what's true is a key step in the journey to beginning to change it.

Whether we intended to function in certain ways or not, the reality is, we have. And we've been a part of systems that have sidelined, marginalized, and 'other-ed' human beings who have every bit as much value and right-to-belong as we do.

So I invite you to ask yourself now: What things have I done to contribute to this problem? What has come through to the world, by my attitudes or behaviour, that has put up a wall instead of built a bridge?

- In the way I operate at work
- how I interact with service personnel
- how I choose my closest friends
- In the movies I watch or media I consume
- In the jokes I make, and the jokes I laugh at...

What have I done to create and reinforce a hierarchy that shouldn't exist? And what things have I left *undone*, that have also contributed to the problem? How has my silence and *inaction* reinforced systems that are hurting other people? What are the ways I have simply ***not done*** the work of Jesus' hands, and love in this world, in the way that I should?

Pray: God we are sorry for the ways in which we have elevated ourselves in false and unloving ways over other people. For how we have made obsessive comparison and judgment a part of our thinking, and our speaking. For the ways we have been cavalier about our impact on people and the world around us. Thank you that your mercies are new every morning and for your promise that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Would you fill us now with fresh grace and fresh hope, and would you use **us to *break down hierarchies***, to see and treat everyone we meet, not as "other" but as "sister & brother." In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.