

May 17th: Many Nations Walking Together

Good morning again my friends, and welcome to our new series, Mosaic–this is a series devoted to exploring the intentional diversity of our Bible, Jesus’ ministry, and the world-wide church. We believe that diversity was always God’s plan–so we’ll be taking a closer look at how we can appreciate that diversity, work towards equity for a wide variety of individuals and groups, and make inclusion a core tenet of our faith and practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not bad words in God’s vocabulary–they are in fact essential to the love and transformation that God promises us as part of our personal and the renewing of our world.

Together we’ll discover how we can embrace this reality and build stronger communities that truly reflect God’s character and compassion. I hope that by the end of this series, you feel even more eager to welcome new people, hear other perspectives, and honor the experiences of people who might look, act, believe, and live differently than we do.

Please join me in prayer before we dive in.

Prophetic God, our world is sometimes full of confusion and animosity, and all too often, we see what divides us instead of what unites us. We see borders, and walls, and reasons to stay separate, rather than your mosaic vision. When we reimagine our lives through your eyes, we can see the possibility of wholeness, and the path towards mutuality and peace. This morning, help us to deepen our commitment to this multiracial and multicultural vision, so that we can experience the true community that you have created us for. Speak to us anew through your holy text, and give us the courage we need to live out your call. Amen.

On Wednesday April 1, 2026, humanity prepared to do something that they hadn’t done in more than fifty years. As the crew of the Artemis II boarded their spacecraft at Kennedy Space Center Launch Complex, they prepared to become the first humans since 1972 to leave low Earth orbit–the first crew to

do so since the Apollo 17 mission landed on the moon. The four astronauts sent out to complete a flyby of the moon included the first person of color, the first woman, the first non-US citizen, and the oldest person to travel beyond Earth's atmosphere. Together they named their ship Integrity, and their communications from that ship have now become some of the most powerful statements and footage shared with the world.

Take for example, the photo shared by Commander Reid Wiseman, titled "Hello World." Taken out the window of the Integrity's capsule, it shows swirling clouds, vast seas, and the lights of the Iberian peninsula and North Africa. On a livestream with global media, Wiseman said, "There was a moment, about an hour ago, where mission control Houston reoriented our spacecraft as the sun was setting behind the Earth ... but you could see the entire globe from pole to pole, you could see Africa, Europe, and if you looked really close, you could see the Northern Lights, it was the most spectacular moment, and it paused all four of us in our tracks."

Throughout the eleven day journey to and from the moon, other astronauts shared similar thoughts. They described this experience as majestic, surreal, breathtaking and awe-inspiring, beautiful and yet also beyond words. Jeremy Hansen from Canada shared this: "As we surpass the furthest distance humans have ever traveled from planet Earth, we do so in honoring the extraordinary efforts and feats of our predecessors in human space exploration. We will continue our journey even further into space before Mother Earth succeeds in pulling us back to everything that we hold dear."

A lot has changed on Mother Earth since the Apollo 17 crew departed Earth and went on their own mission.

Since 1972, humans have launched the internet as we know it today, invented cell phones, and made technology even more a part of our daily lives. We eradicated smallpox in 1980, we've mapped the human genome, and life changing advancements have been made in organ transplants, vaccines, and cancer treatments. We've adopted new hairstyles, shopped for new fashion

trends, and tasted new foods that had previously been unavailable in our American cities and small towns. It hasn't all been positive though—we had the Watergate Scandal of 1974, the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the Arab Spring in the early 2010s. I'm sure you can name many more tragic and deadly events that we would prefer to forget.

But when the astronauts from the Artemis crew looked out their windows, did they see a different planet than the one seen by the Apollo team? Sure, the Berlin wall had fallen, and Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia no longer existed in the way that they had in the past, and South Sudan split away from its northern neighbor, but can you see that from space? Can you see our human borders and our man-made national boundaries when you're above Earth's atmosphere?

Before we answer that, let's think about this for a second.

I think a lot of us imagine that these dividing lines between different countries are something that has always existed—like a permanent part of our human story. But that isn't actually the case. Like new technology and new medical treatments and new fashion trends, they are subject to change. Empires rise and fall, nations get invaded or invade others, separatist movements within countries happen—that's something we've consistently seen happen over the course of human history. When they change, does that impact how we see each other? When these geopolitical shifts happen, how should we respond?

I think this is an important question for us—especially as nationalistic movements surge across our world. It's natural to feel some sort of pride in the country of your birth or the nation that you belong to, but I'd like to suggest that there is a distinct difference between healthy patriotism and the idol of nationalism. The author George Orwell describes it well, and gives us a timely warning. He claimed, "By 'patriotism' I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force upon other people. Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is

inseparable from the desire for power. The abiding purpose of every nationalist is to secure more power and more prestige, *not* for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality.”

In the case of our country, this warning also applies to Christian Nationalism, which is an increasingly powerful ideology which combines white supremacy, imperialism & manifest destiny, authoritarian leadership, and a warped understanding of our Bible. Christian nationalism demands that the government of our nation enforces strict conformity to so-called biblical ideals of patriarchy, racial segregation, and the oppression and stigmatization of queer individuals upon all of its citizens, as well as other nations in its sphere of influence. Christian nationalism demands an unwavering allegiance to specific leaders who will carry out these plans. Christian nationalism demands that all Christians adopt this fear based, control oriented theology. Christian nationalism demands allegiance to something other than Christ.

But is this the way things are supposed to be? What does our Bible actually have to say about the racial and ethnic diversity of our world? I’m so glad you asked!

Our Old Testament Micah has something that I think we need to hear. Micah originally gave his prophecies to the 8th century kingdom of Judah, but his message is more timely than ever. Micah is one of my favorite biblical authors because he does not mince words—he’s very direct in how he communicates to God’s people. At various points in his writings, Micah specifically calls for the destruction of Jerusalem, because the corruption and injustice of the royal family and priestly leadership has harmed the most vulnerable of Judah’s citizens. But Micah also loves God’s people, and he loves God’s creation. He says these harsh truths because he knows that there’s a bigger picture that can transform how we live and act towards each other.

And in chapter 4, so he gives his kingdom these words of hope. He lays out a new vision to guide them. In these first few verses, he tells them a temple will be built, and people from all nations will stream to it. As they gather, they will

ask for God's wisdom saying, "He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." Once they have received this divine guidance, a number of things will happen as they walk together, Micah writes: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." We even get this image of rest, abundance, and peacefulness, as Micah promises, "Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken."

The bit about swords and plowshares is a pretty famous quote that you might have heard before, and this is where it comes from. Micah is the one who imagines for us a world where weapons are turned into tools for flourishing, and everyone has more than enough space and delicious figs to go around. Micah envisions a community characterized by contentment, safety, and deep respect for each other. He's the one who says that when everyone is gathered in God's presence, there won't be any more war or fighting for territory, because we'll realize that it all belongs to God, and it has from the beginning.

But that's not all. In verse 6, Micah claims that God will gather up the lame, the exiled, and those in grief, and make them a remnant, a new nation born out of the fragmentation of the old. Out of the brokenness of the current injustice and splintered people groups, God will create something that will survive and persevere. This new nation of the vulnerable and marginalized, led by God's power and glory, will exist forever and ever. God will ensure that this remnant will carry the message of hope into the future together.

I'm sure this vision of God's global nation sounded impossible to the people of Micah's time, just as it probably sounds almost impossible to our modern ears. How can people of all different backgrounds, life experiences, national identities, and cultures come together when we are constantly engaged in violent warfare, trade embargoes, legislative disenfranchisement, hate crimes, social media bickering, and other forms of injustice? Why even try? Isn't that just a recipe for disappointment?

My friends, Micah is here to remind us that no, it's not impossible. It may be impossible for us alone, but it's never impossible for God. This is God's dream for us. This is God's hope for us. This is what God's spirit is working towards. This is a movement that we get to be part of. If you're wondering how we, God's mosaic people, can start to live into future reality today, then let's go back to the Artemis mission because I think our mosaic of astronauts has a clue to share.

Let's go back to that image of looking down on our planet—and what we might see.

In 1987, philosopher Frank White reflected on the unique perspective that space exploration gives humanity, dubbing the feeling of seeing the whole Earth at once as “the overview effect.” More than simply the experience of looking down at an entire planet, the overview effect produces a unique cognitive result—thinkers like White and modern neuroscientists talk about how this specific vantage point creates an overwhelming sense of unity, a deeper appreciation for our home's natural beauty and expansiveness, and a transcendent euphoria as astronauts see the world the way that God might.

Victor Glover captured this perfectly when he stated, "And from up here, you also look like one thing. Homo sapiens, all of us, no matter where you're from or what you look like, we're all one people." He continued, "As we get close to the nearest point to the Moon and the farthest point from Earth and continue to unlock the mysteries of the cosmos, I would like to remind you of one of the most important mysteries on Earth, and that's love...And to all of you down there on Earth and around Earth, we love you, from the moon."

Christian Koch shared a similarly inspirational message in one of her statements: "We will explore. We will build. We will build ships. We will visit again. We will construct science outposts. We will drive rovers. We will do radio astronomy. We will found companies. We will bolster industry. We will inspire. But ultimately, we will always choose Earth. We will always choose each other."

In closing, I'd like to suggest that perhaps what our world needs is more of this "overview effect" and less of our fragmented, individualized perspectives. If we looked at our world and each other the way that God does, when he's gazing at us from the vantage point of eternity, I have a feeling that it might shift our understanding of humanity's brokenness from a hopeless, neverending situation, into an opportunity to share and realize Micah's vision, we might find large and small ways to bring cohesion and peace to our communities.

If that remnant nation was our goal, the light guiding us into the future, the wisdom leading us towards a new path—we might act differently every day. We might choose to help a neighbor, or donate to a local foodbank, or join a protest in our city. We might choose to speak out against Christian nationalism and the injustices that it promotes. We might choose to protect the marginalized and vulnerable, and confront homophobia and transphobia. We might choose to find commonalities with other cultures and celebrate what those cultures might teach us. We might choose to see each other as friends for the journey, as we move towards safety and wholeness in this generation and in the next.

Because my friends, we are on this journey together. Our mosaic mission leads us towards a world in which all things, including us, are made new. And when this has come to pass and we are all together in eternity, God will rejoice that all of his beloved children have walked side by side and hand in hand.

Ram Dass, the psychologist and guru of eastern spirituality, most known for his 1971 book, *Be Here Now*, had this to say about our divine path: "We're all just walking each other home."

My friends, let's walk together well this week.

Amen.