

Kev's sermon notes for on-line eGroups

Sunday, May 31, 2020 at 9:30 AM – broadcasting from Ballantyne Campus
Elevation – eFam – All sites participating on-line due to COVID-19 Pandemic
During riots and demonstrations following the death of George Floyd in MN

A site-down with Pastor John Gray and Pastor Steven Furtick

Sermon Title: “Be the Bridge - The Sins of Silence and Sins of Apathy - Staying Quiet = Being In Agreement – Speaking to Injustice and the Pain”

Profile of Pastor John Gray: See: <https://johngrayministries.com/about>

Also see: Becoming the Bridge - <https://johngrayministries.com/partner-1>

Elevation Worship:

- Never Walk Away - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9SXVpJruwg>
- Rattle! - The Silence of Saturday and the Rattle of Resurrection - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrAdbH28gIg>
- ***** Guest worship leader Chandler Moore from Maverick City Music: An incredible melody of “Do it Again” - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOBIPb-6PTc> and “You Said It - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TrVCZF-4pl> and “The Blessing” - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp6aygmVzM4> – both remarkable and timely relative to the present demonstrations and riots in our cities.

More on Chandler Moore – Most Beautiful / So In Love (feat. Chandler Moore) - Maverick City Music - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCAY_qeDo-w

Scripture:

- Numbers 6: The Priestly Blessing - 22 The Lord said to Moses, 23 “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: 24 ““The Lord bless you and keep you; 25 the Lord make his face shine on you - and be gracious to you; 26 the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.””
- Psalm 139: 1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. 5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. 7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. 11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. 13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before

one of them came to be. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you. 19 If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are loodthirsty! 20 They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. 21 Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you? 22 I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies. 23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

- John 17 John 17 Jesus Prays for All Believers - 20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one- 23 I in them and you in me-so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."
- Romans 12: 9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Sermon notes from a site down with Pastor John Gray and Pastor Steven Furtick - "Be the Bridge - The Sins of Silence and Sins of Apathy - Staying Quiet = Being In Agreement – Speaking to Injustice and the Pain"

- "Here Comes Church" – Elevation Church in action:
 - Wisdom from Pastor Furtick: It is all about the vision and not the strategy – etch the vision in stone and draft the strategy in pencil. The Vision is constant but the strategy is always evolving.
 - Recall the Testimony of Jeff Bates – eKids pastor – creating an on-line kids ministry to better empower parents during this Pandemic.
 - Weekly Rhythm nights every night at 7PM on Sunday to better assist the needs of middle school and high school students – 700 kids have requested to join an on-line eGroup.
- Are you Interested in joining an eGroup (small group) so you don't have to walk this walk alone? – See www.elevationchurch.cc.
- Opening comments and by Chandler Moore: Today is a great weekend to be reminded of the promises of the Lord over us – many of us are losing sight, hope, and language based on what is going on all around us - and what is happening in our country and our world – it is best that we put our kingdom in heavenly perspective – and be reminded of what we live by - and how the word of God guides us. He will be with us through everything - and he will neither abandon us nor forsake us – we've never seen the righteous forsaken – and we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land

of the living – our confidence is not in earthen vessels – our confidence is in the word of God – and we want to be reminded of these promises – father we thank you for this moment – I think that you are opening hearts - even now – that you are encouraging souls even now – to be reminded of things that you have spoken and things that you have said – and we are encouraged today because we have hope in you – you keep every word that you say – and you stand by everything that you have declared over us – that you have called us favorite and that you have called is chosen – that you called us forgiven - that you’ve called us a royal priesthood a holy nation – that you meant that and you stand by that – so we focus in this – and we hone in on what you say today – Lord posture ourselves.

- Opening prayer by Pastor Furtick: Welcome everybody from all over the world – we come today to praise Jesus – His promises never fail and He never changes – thank you for the blessings of God and thank you for allowing us to see another day – dear Lord we thank you for another opportunity to bow before you – to place all our fears and anxieties and sadness into your hands – Lord it’s been a heavy week and it’s been a heavy year – and it seems like things keep getting darker – and we keep losing the light that we guide by – and sometimes we even lose our hope – and we don’t want to admit that but we do – for today we ask that you shine the light as to who you are – and help us understand all those things that we do not understand. Bless all those that encounter you today – speak to us so that we hear you – oh great god – you meet every need – keeper of every secret – you see our tears – uphold your people Today – you are a keeper and a sustainer and a friend. In Jesus Name. Amen.
- Opening comments: In scripture Jesus spoke to the people that others would not stand for. As our nation is reeling from the murder George Floyd in Minneapolis Minnesota at the hands of a law enforcement officer – now is the time for Pastor John Gray and I to sit down and have a conversation about racism in America and a way forward.
- Sometimes the best way to take a stand is to take a seat.
- Jesus was able to stand for people and address the heart of a matter because he sat down with people – to understand situations.
- This is a tag team moment between Elevation Church and Relentless – a chocolate and vanilla swirl moment – or mocha and vanilla moment.
- We have all probably seen the gruesome video of a law enforcement officer holding down George Floyd.
- Pastor Furtick: I felt very empty after posting my comments after viewing the video of George Floyd being murdered at the hands of a police officer – between crying and praying and asking for God what to do - Even one of my sons felt pretty hopeless in response to video. Shortly thereafter, I received a text from you (Pastor John Gray).
- Pastor Furtick: Events from this week necessitated the need for a meeting and sit down today – and we need to speak into the pain and the injustice – And we need to speak into what God says about it. In reflection I had no idea what to say or do – now here you are – and we are really grateful to have you here.
- Pastor John Gray: I’m glad you have the courage to speak into the moment – when many of our white pastors have reserved their comments until they get all of the facts – and despite all of your influence and the global position of leadership that you hold in your church – regardless if you are in possession of all the facts – it takes courage to state “this is wrong.” And for that - I want to

thank you - because you spoke about something that has been quite real for us as black pastors. Far too often when stuff like this happens, I get text messages but not an actual conversation – in this particular issue - silence = agreement. Quiet prayers are nice however public declarations stating “this is wrong” are better. This isn’t all about race – it’s about justice – and the entire Bible is all about justice.

- **Pastor John Gray: Both the old Testament and New Testament or clear – God is even clear with Israel – treat the alien and the stranger among you – this is how you treat them. If I put my knee into the neck of a dog and was caught on video everyone would want me to go to jail and I would never preach again. This is a problem – it is a heart problem – it is an empathy problem – it is systemic – and thank you for being willing to step out from the shadows and use your considerable influence to let the world know that you stand for justice – that you stand for what is right.**
- Pastor Furtick: It would be hypocrisy for me as a pastor for a diverse church like this – to celebrate the diversity and never addressed the disparity – although we do not turn this pulpit into a reflection of the new cycle – that would be lethal to our ability to preach and teach God’s word – this is a moment of time as a global ministry where it is different - what we are talking about today is the very heart and soul of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- **Pastor Furtick: This is not an issue that we can relegate to root system – as diverse as this church is – I need to speak to the injustice and the pain – otherwise I am not ministering – I am merely rearranging the aesthetic in order to be pleasing.**
- Pastor Furtick: Pastor John Gray I don’t know anyone that’s more effective it’s transcending mindsets to speak to both black and white – and being inclusive – while speaking to the needs of everyone – where did this come from and how did God develop this in you?
- Pastor John Gray: It started with my mother who was a social worker for 40 years in the 80s and late 70s – and often she was the only African woman in an office filled with white people - and she had to work doubly hard to be taken seriously – and she never brought bitterness home – she always brought hope home – this was always fascinating to me – it was always rooted in who she was. She was always the person to build bridges – and she taught me to be the same – and she taught me to cultivate the ability to speak with people with diverse backgrounds and to empathize with them (and see the content of their character). I was always the person to help build bridges even before it was popular – often times we look at the image of something and not the substance of something – **and my mother taught me how to see people through the lens of grace – so I extend the grace that I want people to extend me – so I grew up honoring all cultures even though I did not understand them – I continue to want to step into other people’s reality and feel what it’s like to be them – the challenges for me is that I do not always see this coming the other way – because if there was always empathy there never would be this lack of humanity.**
- **Pastor John Gray: What I think is most critical for people to understand in this moment is the concept of diversity and inclusion. Being black in America is a different experience every single day – where I even have to deal with bigotry and racism in my own neighborhood – we have a problem that has been emboldened by the current system – where if I drive the wrong way or walk the wrong way - they will not know the Pastor John Gray that has preached with you in Australia and wants to raise kids that are effective global citizens – where my blackness is weaponized before you know content of my character – and this is a problem.**

- Pastor John Gray: We can't solve this at the legislative level – to change someone's heart – this is why it has to happen in the church – because only the Holy Spirit can change the heart – and change their mind – and change their perspective – and change their perception – and give people value – that every single human being that God ever created has the same inherent value because of the blood of Jesus – I have the same right to pursue my dream as you. I don't want special treatment Steven – I want equal treatment – it's not your fault – it's the system that has been here since 1619. Despite all of the reforms and all of the attempts – we have yet to see equality – The truth is that we are only three generations away from humans owning humans in this nation – and we need to talk about it – not politically – from the church. Pastor John Gray: We need to reconcile the sins of silence – sins of apathy – sins of indifference.
- **Pastor Furtick: As senior pastor of a diverse church I can't just profess the clichés of Christianity and inequality – as a leader of this church it's not political - it's personal – and everyone I have spoken to is equally disgusted and appalled at what happened to George Floyd – should it take that for us to hear the cries of our brothers and sisters? For me the situation we are in is symbolic of the condition we allow and yet we will give more attention to the symptoms versus the sickness beneath it.**
- **Pastor John Gray: What you said speaks to the conversations that we need to have in forums like this – it should not take the image of a man's life been taken away – to understand the lack of human empathy – all of us who understand the Geo-religious construct from the different versions of Jesus depending on what part of the country we live in. In the south some folks are real loud about their Jesus – but real quiet about this – the truth is that Jesus is not Democrat or Republican – he is monarchist – and we need to deal with Jesus as He is.**
- Pastor John Gray: These abuses by law-enforcement authorities shock us from our position of apathy – should it take that? – No, but it has.
- **Pastor Furtick: when our consciousness is pierced, this gives us a window – my issue is that we have reduced Jesus and Christianity on the only the comfortable things - and shocking events like this put us in a state of despair – and despair is just as deadly as denial. And we have to be careful as to live in denial and accept and tolerate it because we lack the tools to fix it at a regional or global level – and give up on the possibility to change it – and we have replaced the art of the conversation with clicks and short comments – and so we don't talk and therefore we don't empathize – and we don't take the time to understand people that come from different perspectives – and we just surround ourselves with people that merely confirm our biases – and we never challenge ourselves to seek something beyond our own perspective – keeping us in states of spiritual immaturity – or even regressive states – because we've never stressed ourselves to better understand other people's experiences.**
- Pastor John Gray: Thank you Pastor Furtick for what you're saying – we should allow ourselves to have a genuine human moment with others – see Psalm 137. The writer asked the question how can we sing in such a strange land – God allows the human emotion to be expressed without judgment – we tend to not want to know the truth - however we do want to feel good – and each individual should be dealt with based on their own character and what you're doing – God created color and culture because he wanted diversity.

- Pastor John Gray – see John 17: 20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.”
- This means that diversity was the seed as to our willingness to lay down culture and pick up the kingdom and this is why this conversation is important. And this conversation should not be approached from a judgmental perspective – nor should we consider that change is unworthy because of the pain of the moment – anger should not be tempered to cater to someone else’s discomfort – some of us are enraged and scared – it’s enough to think about a pandemic that’s killing African-Americans at a disproportionate rate – as well as the virus of racism that has been going on for a while – the pressure of both is a lot – and we should be able to have a conversation without shredding each other’s humanity.
- Pastor John Gray: we need to probe into the substance and not dwell on the image of a person – and if people are in pain, the first thing they see is what they remember the most – and we are at a very sensitive place – and our intentions might be pure however people are still processing the pain.
- Pastor John Gray: One of the biggest problems is that we are dealing with two versions of Jesus -
- Pastor Furtick: We have packaged Jesus and programmed him to say the five things that we want him to say – sort of like a doll with a cord that we pull – and ignore the underlying tension. Some of the things that Jesus said was so controversial that they got him killed – because Jesus threatened the power structure – because of the hope that he was projecting onto the marginalized – that was so threatening for those that were in power.
- Recall the story of past Furtick joining an all black choir in South Carolina while in high school – and the Black Student Fellowship (BSF) choir – that we changed to Brothers and Sisters Fellowship (BSF) for the two years that Pastor Furtick was there – this established the vision to form the diverse body of Elevation Church – we should not limit our God to our own individual experiences – we should not bring our God down to the level of our individual preferences.
- Pastor Furtick: I think exposure to diverse thinking and diverse cultures is critical – and if I simplify the situation to what is projected on CNN or Fox news I would not be able to empathize with people and understand their humanity - and the only reason I’m able to have this conversation with you pastor John Gray is because we have a great relationship – and if you did not give me the gift of your lens, I would not understand how an African American person in my church had the police called on them because they were bringing out their garbage too late in the evening – and we need to all do a better job of starting to understand – otherwise it will be too late – we have to start reading and we have to start learning and exposing ourselves to some things.
- **Pastor Furtick: Jesus tells us to be the light of the world – I also take this to mean that we are not to be ignorant – it means we have to shine light on ignorance – we have to have revelation of those things we do not understand – where we say with intellectual honesty: just because I did not experience it does not mean it does not exist.**
- Pastor John Gray: Pastor Furtick, your experience with the BSF choir is a beautiful thing because your presence changed the system – and this is why God had you in those places – because God knew that you were going to be sitting in this chair in 2020 – not just pandering to a church – this is the power of the moment – the problem with building bridges is that some walk all over you once you lay down – the communities that you ended up building was the result of your organic

experience - that became intentional – and there’s intentionality around carrying on conversations related to diversity in the United States of America – and as a church we have run the other way – take for example the growth and Christian schools – where white kids could avoid going to the local schools – similar to how Southern Baptists different from other Baptist because they wanted to keep their slaves – the oppression by law enforcement officers is years in the making – and we can’t be silent anymore – and must be addressed. There is a need to have all of these conversations in our respective homes.

- **Pastor Furtick: Guilt is not a strategy – perhaps we don’t know the difference between guilt and repentance – making someone feel bad doesn’t change anything – repentance means to change direction in the Old Testament and repentance means to change your mind in the New Testament. We change direction and we do things differently – and we need to do things differently now – and the only way to break the cycle is to repent – sitting here singing “bridge over troubled waters” is not going to solve anything – this is nothing more than an anesthetic – however repentance is real change – where we ask ourselves how we can change our minds so that we see things the way God sees things – allowing my heart to see beyond the corners of my own darkness – where I no longer cosign intolerance by the nature of my silence – this is repentance. Repentance is moving differently, thinking differently, getting up and walking in a different direction – and refusing to assume a posture of indifference.**
- **Pastor John gray: when you talk about changing direction, questions we need to be asking in this moment – what is in my heart and how did it get there? If you say I’m cool with everybody – what exactly does that mean? Are you cool with having your white daughter marry a black man? How about your aunts and uncles? How about your grandparents? This conversation needs to be done at home – not just in church. How many disparaging words are used in a home when talking about both white and black people? We can’t absolve any community of responsibility – in order to have genuine healing, it means we have to deal with the pain and anguish on one side as well as the indifference and apathy on the other. There is responsibility – I don’t get to use my pain as a pulpit to get angry at every white person – when there are areas of collective responsibility that I need to take – if we are really going to change our minds – we have to be honest about what is in there in the first place – and how it got there – and how we can affect that.**
- **Pastor Steven Furtick: we need to model this so that God can change one heart and mind at a time – and it needs to happen at the kitchen table – not only as a token conversation – a type of conversation that permeates our lives and honors Jesus Christ our Savior. And there has to be more than just words – and the conversation we are having today as it is a start – what is in your heart that you want to see other people do today? Do not just think – do not just post.**
- **Pastor John Gray: I want this conversation to be a tipping point for the church – to foster true reconciliation – as it states in John 17, we need to have a presence of God in our conversation – and in our minds - and our hearts, otherwise empathy and activism will not matter. I want this to be the start of dialogue that we need to have with each other – and then we need to have real world application in real time – where we call out regional and national systemic injustice – and everybody mobilize and move in that same direction. Also see <https://johngrayministries.com/partner-1>. There are many people that don’t know what is going on – It is one thing to be angry and prejudicial – another thing to be apathetic because you don’t know – and let’s have these conversations.**

- Pastor John Gray: And how exactly do we meet on this bridge? In what is the purpose of unity? Unity is not uniformity – we are not going to agree on everything – we can still leave our safe zones and come out onto the bridge – have the initial uncomfortable conversation – and then eventually start working on the systemic issues like red lining, credit worthiness, and the ability to get a small business loan – some of this is systemic some of it is monetary and all of it is spiritual – and then we can mobilize from there – where are we all moving the same direction and have a heart for diversity – not soft Kumbaya stuff because that doesn't work – compassion that Jesus spoke about is this: I want to feel your pain and you should feel my pain. Jesus always empathizes with the lost – and demonstrated compassion – and we need to have compassion for those that suffer from systemic racism – and the racism that has existed in the church on both sides – we need to meet in the middle.
- **Pastor Furtick: Thank you today for your wisdom and your perspective – I have never had a friend more brilliant than you – not so brilliant that you forget how to make us feel – I think that we become so numb that we do not feel anything anymore – please pray for those of us to feel overwhelmed – those of us that feel that we can't do anything therefore we won't do anything – and also please pray for the people that are blind to this and allow God to open our eyes.**
- Closing Prayer by John Gray: I love you – I'm grateful for your life – I'm grateful for your heart – I'm so grateful that we both are alive during this period of time and serving God together – Thank you for Elevation Church that is breaking the back of the devil that existed in this region of the country for hundreds of years. I hope that you live long enough to see the fruits of your efforts. Thank you for being a friend. You have a lot to lose if this goes wrong. And for all of the black bodies that have been accumulating due to injustices – and a lack of human empathy – and I'm grateful this moment has begun – and I pray that the church will not avoid this conversation. I have always been the pastor running between black churches and white churches and trying to be the bridge – I am more than a preacher – I am a man – I'm a black man – my life matters – and is equal to every other life in this nation and in this world – yes all lives matter – and for those that did not get an opportunity for justice their lives matter – please have compassion and empathy in this moment – for the pain from the people that never had anyone to advocate for them – may the church be a voice to the voiceless – and may you feel something – ask the Holy Spirit to give you a heart of flesh – have the heart of Jesus become active in you – that we will live in community and fight for the unity of the Spirit and the bonds of peace – to pursue peace with all men – touch our hearts – take our hearts to a point of action – I pray that no more bodies have to lie on the ground – and no more cities have to burn – I pray that the pain is now so severe as to effectuate change – and change starts in your heart – by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus - allow us to have this initial conversation – and reconcile this issue through the church – true heart change comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit – sounding most perfectly in the person of Jesus – may we have a relentless moment of elevated consciousness – elevate us God – and may we pursue justice relentlessly – may we celebrate our differences while attacking at its root the system of oppression and the spirit of injustice. Lord, change our hearts so that we see everyone is equally valuable – God give us hope – give us peace – give us strength – Show us the pathway – This is my prayer – in Jesus' name – amen
- **Shorter Closing Prayer by John Gray: Thank you for Elevation Church that is breaking the back of the devil that existed in this region of the country for hundreds of years. And for all of the black bodies that have been accumulating due to injustices – and a lack of human empathy – and I'm**

grateful this moment has begun – and I pray that the church will not avoid this conversation. May the church be a voice to the voiceless – and may you feel something – ask the Holy Spirit to give you a heart of flesh – have the heart of Jesus become active in you – that we will live in community and fight for the unity of the Spirit and the bonds of peace – to pursue peace with all men – I pray that the pain is now so severe as to effectuate change – and change starts in our hearts – by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus - allow us to have this initial conversation – and reconcile this issue through the church – may we celebrate our differences while attacking at its root the systems of oppression and injustice. Lord, change our hearts so that we see everyone is equally valuable – God give us hope – give us peace – give us strength – Show us the pathway – This is my prayer – in Jesus’ name – amen