

Racial Reconciliation and Reparations
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Well, it was pretty easy to getting here because there was a dream -- I know you were expecting wise men from the East and so I just followed that star, that Lone Star to Texas. Come on, you all never heard that before? I'm giving you this stuff for free. And it's settled over Decatur, Texas. I hope to depart a little bit of wisdom this morning as much as possible. Unfortunately, I'm going to have to run right after the speech, not because it's a bad speech. Well, you'll have to decide that, but because I am going to catch a plane and get back to Maryland and do visitations tomorrow.

Just let me say, I have experienced once again some good Texas hospitality. You guys are awesome and I love it in so many ways. There was even a gathering in some room last night. I followed my ears, I heard some noise on the third floor, and I walked in and there are a whole bunch of you all there, drinking sarsaparilla and trading tea and crumpets. I also abide with some of you there. As I said, this is a great diocese.

Your bishop graced us in addressing our diocese a few years ago, and so he wanted to pay me back. That's what brings me here today. I have a lot of ground to cover and so we're going to get started.

I've spoken a lot about racial reconciliation lately. A lot lately in various places and I'm reminded of what one woman told me a little while ago, "Bishop Sutton, every one of your speeches is better than the next."

Like I said, it's a little early but I've got better material.

Let's talk about race, who wants to talk about that? There's a conversation that almost all of us want to avoid, precisely because it's difficult and it's ridden with so many emotions, including sadness, grief, guilt, anxiety, anger, hopelessness, it's all there. I'm not going to try to overload you with more than you can handle in this one presentation but I do promise to give you some things to take home with you about where we are, and how we can get to where we all want to be as Americans on race relations.

By the way, prepare yourself to get angry at me at some time in this hour. Okay? Don't worry about it, you're supposed to be angry, you're supposed to get mad so it'll be fine. Remember, I'm just a messenger here and so we have a time-honored tradition of being angry at the messenger, and that's fine, but there are many others after me with the same message. Anger is a part of it. Here we go.

Race relations in the United States

If you ask most Americans, are we as a nation better off now in our race relations than before, the answer is sobering. On that we are all agreed. From a Pew Research Center poll in April of this year, "A majority of Americans say race relations in the United States are bad," and of those about seven in 10 say things are getting worse. Roughly two-thirds of Americans say it has become more common for people to express racist or racially insensitive views since Donald Trump was elected, even if not necessarily more acceptable.

Significantly, even most white people don't feel good about where we are. You ask a black person, for instance, where I live in Baltimore, are we better off racially now than since Martin Luther King died? They will go, "Please." They use a word I shouldn't say here. But it's like, no, that's not it. Almost all of us thought we would be farther along than we would be now, since King died 50 years ago, 1969 exactly 50 years ago this summer. There were so many young people going up to a small town in New York, near Woodstock, it was in Bethel and-- you all remember does anybody here remember Woodstock? Did anybody here go to Woodstock?

It was a long way away but you know, love and peace and harmony, age of Aquarius and all that. I know you remember some of that, [singing] *When the moon was in the seventh house, and Jupiter aligns with Mars, then peace will guide the planets and love will steer the stars. This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. The age of Aquarius.*

That's all right then, Eugene, leave the tape we'll get back to you.

Aquarius was all going to be new, that new age and young people were going to lead the charge. Now, it's 50 years later, you don't think we're in the Age of Aquarius. Again, from the Pew Research, opinions about the state of race relations, and the amount of attention paid to race will vary widely across racial and ethnic groups. Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians are more likely than whites to say that the president has made race relations worse and there's too little attention paid to race in the US these days.

In addition, large majorities of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians, say people not seeing discrimination where it exists, is a bigger problem in the US than people seeing it where it doesn't exist. But whites are about evenly divided on that. By some measures, we really are in a better place. We've taken down the signs saying "White Only" and "Colored Only". We integrated all the water fountains and bathrooms. There's still a problem with some swimming pools. Did you know that not all clubs are open equal either?

More and more blacks can purchase homes in more and more neighborhoods without people getting bent out of shape and saying, "A dark-skinned person moved in our neighborhood!" We're on TV and movie screens, a lot more in starring roles.

Great strides and access to education and good jobs. The present president has a black person in his administration. He's from Baltimore, he's a brain surgeon, and heads HUD. One.

Fewer instances of “she or he is the first black person to _____” . . . You fill in the blank. I was the first African American president-- I mean bishop - in Maryland. They were making a big thing about that, they were asking me, "Well, how does it feel to be the first black bishop in Maryland?" I said, "I'm very proud of my so-called race, heritage." Ultimately, it's all about what you're about and what you do.

I started talking about the environmental crisis, and how it even more affects people of color and the poor. I said, "I just assumed you'd call me the green bishop, rather than the black bishop." That became the kind of joke around Maryland, "Hey, there's the green bishop." I tell you, it's not easy being green. Okay, I'll take that one too.

I don't want to minimize the very substantial gains in racial justice over the past 50 years. We can all celebrate the tremendous strides that have been made in racial attitudes in our nation. We're proud of all the accomplishments the many black individuals who have overcome great odds to achieve success.

Family Story

My parents came up in the great migration from North Carolina, to Washington, DC seeking a better life, seeking a life - just to live. They didn't have anything. They had little education. That wasn't afforded my parents. Because of the color of their skin, my father couldn't graduate from high school. There wasn't one in that county for him.

They came to DC with nothing. Well, they had something. They had each other and they had faith. They had faith in God. They prayed and they worked hard. And they prayed and they worked hard some more. They went back to school. I graduated from college the same year as my mother. She got a job in the State Department and rose to become one of their good budget analysts. That's right, she was a bureaucrat. That kind of hurts when I know so many people who have given their lives and careers for service to our nation and have them dismissed by the rest of the nation – oh a government worker.

The government, though, provided a job for her and for him when so many private businesses would not. He eventually started his own business. He was an auto mechanic. He also owned Sutton's auto repair for 37 years before he retired, and also apartment buildings, and he drove taxi cabs. He did whatever he had to do to put food on the table against odds, raising up boys in Washington DC, keeping us out of trouble. One of the ways they did that is in the summertime, my brother and I would get shipped off to the farm with some relatives in North Carolina.

Somehow, they thought that would be better for us than being on the streets of Washington in the summer. My parents were crazy, but I learned how to crop the tobacco and all sorts of things. I got my hands dirty, they thought that was important. I still took that with me, we run a program in Baltimore for high school students to take them off the streets in the summer and we try to teach them how to be good men, young women for this society. It's called the Sutton Scholars Program. I didn't name it, they named it after me.

It's not a religious program but the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland has committed itself to inner-city students in the city of Baltimore, partnering with the city, the state, and with some foundations and corporations to do some good. I learned that from my parents. Well, they made it. They made it. Right now, I can't afford to live in the neighborhood we grew up in. Shaw. It's all gentrified and you need hundreds of thousands of dollars to get a little room there, but that's where I grew up.

Swimming in an Ocean of Racism

I owe a lot to my parents, I learned the value of faith in God, and prayer, and how that can matter, can make a difference in people's lives. But for the millions of descendants of slaves, who are trapped in a pernicious cycle of hopelessness, poverty, and rage - rage - due to their real experience of racial segregation, redlining, inferior schools, and the like, the widespread assumption that everyone can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps is a lie.

They know that the odds are against them, the high school students we work with, and we commit ourselves to them for four years in high school and we know where they're facing great odds. They're in bad schools. They live in bad neighborhoods. Everything's against them. They're not going to Harvard. They don't have a chance, they'll barely get into except for maybe one or two exceptions, anything that will allow them to accumulate some wealth, some way to get by.

They know the odds are against them. They cannot change their environment. They cannot change the color of their dark skin. These days it certainly doesn't feel that we are closer to being the racially harmonious society than we were when Dr. King was cut down by the rifle of a white supremacist in 1968. We have a long, long history in this nation of terrorism.

African Americans comprise only 13% of the U. S. population, 14% it's estimated of monthly drug users, yet account for 37% of the people arrested for drug-related offenses in America. I wonder why?

Studies show that the police are more likely to pull over and frisk blacks and Latinos than whites. One study in New York City showed that 85% of blacks and Latinos who were stopped by the police were frisked. For white persons who were stopped only 8% were frisked. In 2010, the U. S. Sentencing Commission reported that

African Americans receive 10% longer sentences than whites through the federal system for the same crimes. I wonder why?

In 2009, African Americans were 21% more likely than whites to receive mandatory minimum sentences, and 20% more likely to be sentenced to prison than white drug defendants for the same crimes. I wonder why?

Fifty-one percent of Americans a few years ago expressed anti-black sentiments in a poll. That was a 3% increase. That was a 3% increase since 2008. Increase. There are numerous studies showing implicit bias in some amount in all of us, especially those who say “I don't see color or race,” and “I don't have a racist bone in my body.”

I don't know how that happens.

We swim -- all of us -- white, black -- we swim in a sea, an ocean of racism. A fish doesn't know it's wet. It is hard for an American to know what it's like to be in an anti-racist environment. And it affects all of us. Even blacks will have anti-black racist feelings, bigoted because it's the ocean that we all swim in.

I read recently at one study that said doctors show more racist attitudes when they are not rested. When they have these longer shifts, and at the end of long shifts they're stressed out and more racism comes out. I'm going to tell you right now my white brothers and sisters, I'm very invested in -- my black brothers and sisters -- we're very invested in you getting all the rest you can get.

[laughter]

That is one of the spiritual practices I really want you to do, get your rest. Chill, tranquilo, calm down.

As a young man in college, I kept hearing young people today are growing up in a less racist multiracial and multicultural world and they get it. So, racism will be practically dead in a generation or maybe two at most.

Now it's been about two generations since King, and here we are. I don't think we can kick that can down the road anymore and say the next generation, the young people will get it. This is a conversation for adults. We have to do something about this.

Are we doomed to live in racial strife, mistrust, and conflict? If that is true then why? If so, how do we fix it?

Four things to do

What I'm going to do is give your four things I think we need to do to fix this problem.

One, we need to commit ourselves to having civil conversations. No more name-calling. I live in Baltimore. I know the names that we are called in this predominantly black and brown city. Those names come right out of the playbook of racist tropes that have been played and replayed in this country for hundreds of years.

The kind of joke that we may have mentioned yesterday, the fact it was a racial slur that the president gave against Baltimore: "rats," "vermin infested," "where no human being is fit to live."

I wrote him a letter. That letter got signed by all of the major denominations, the leaders, the bishops and all the-- Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran.

We sent him a letter. Let me just read an extract from that letter that I wrote to our president after saying, "I pray for you every week." As Episcopalians, we pray for our leaders and we pray that God will give them wisdom and all. So, this is not out of hatred; this comes out of prayer.

"Recently, much to our dismay and profound sadness, you publicly slurred our beloved City of Baltimore in a tweet. We will not dignify the slur by repeating it. It was horrible, demeaning and beneath the dignity of a political leader who should be encouraging us all to strive and work for a civil, more just and more compassionate society.

"It is all too easy to look for scapegoats and fault others for longstanding systemic problems that beset every community. Cities, which bring together diverse races, languages, cultures, economic and social conditions, are frequent targets for those who cannot, or will not, see their beauty through the eyes of God and in their inhabitants.

"To their detractors, cities are only seen through the lens of social evils such as poverty, crime, violence, and racism. To God, however, cities are seen primarily as vessels of hope, lights of God's reign, and opportunities for living in blessed community.

"In the Holy Scriptures, the prophet Jeremiah uplifted his people who were in despair: Here's what he said in Jeremiah 29, "Thus says the Lord God of hosts-- Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in the city's welfare you will find your welfare. Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, say the Lord." [Jeremiah 29:7-9]

We still fighting against false prophets and diviners who lie about the dream of God.

"Great leaders like Jeremiah had a compelling vision for their people, and they knew how to bring the diverse people together around that vision. Our

congregations have a similar vision of health and prosperity for Baltimore, and they are working courageously and effectively to build up the city by their actions, not tearing it down by their words.

"In Baltimore, Episcopalians are teaching children to read, to study, they grow in safe environments. In Baltimore, Episcopalians are reaching out to high school students and programs that keep them off the streets and expand their opportunities. In Baltimore, Episcopalians are saving the lives of those addicted by opioids, alcohol and other drugs. We are reclaiming abandoned buildings for housing and other community needs. We are taking real steps to reduce gun violence and promote social cohesion.

"We are helping recent immigrants and refugees to settle in and thrive in their new environments. We are feeding, clothing, and housing those who have nowhere else to turn and no one else to help them. We are planting trees, we're growing gardens, we're cleaning up streets and waterways to protect God's good earth from pollution."

That's the image of the Episcopal church I want the world to see. This is a club you can get into. It is a club that's not closed but its door is wide open. It is not about self-preservation, it's about helping to realize the vision of God for the community, the world. I'm not going to read more, maybe the last line.

"Mr. President, as religious leaders we implore you in the name of all that is good, healthy and decent, to stop putting people down. Enough of the harmful rhetoric that angers and discourages the people and communities that you are called to serve, more than you know.

"Lead."

[applause]

He hasn't answered it yet.

[laughter]

We invited him to come to Baltimore and we'll welcome him. We really will. We'll welcome him. Civil conversations, that's one.

Two, we need to remind ourselves that social critique of our nation's history and present life is both healthy and patriotic. Critique of this nation and its history is healthy and patriotic.

But you've got to know what patriotism is. I'm indebted to William Sloane Coffin for this, he said, "There are three forms of patriotism, two are bad and one is good." First the two bad. He says, "There's the form of patriotism which is a loveless

criticism." These are people who would just as soon spit on America, burn its national symbols such as the flag and whose anger at the country of their birth is both unhealthy and unhelpful. You get the sense that they really don't love this country, they're just mad. That's unhealthy patriotism.

Two, the second form is the "uncritical love" version of patriotism. These are those patriots who cannot brook any serious critique, let alone condemnation of the president, of the government, or the culture at large. But the only chance that a liberal democracy such as ours can succeed is if there is an informed populace, deeply in love with their country who love it enough to challenge it. They educate themselves rather than mis-educate and run away from unpleasant truths.

The nation's founders, they knew that dissent in the democracy is not a synonym for disloyalty, and that what is really unpatriotic is subservience. That's what they were afraid of.

That leads to the third, the best form of patriotism. The really good patriots are those who in every country carry on a lover's quarrel, a lover's quarrel with their country. Which is a reflection of God's eternal lover's quarrel with the world. God quarrels with, contends with, the nation precisely because God loves it and wants the nation to act in the world for justice, not for national self-interest.

This is the biblical ideal for the people of God if they are to be faithful. This was the stance of the prophets in the Old and New Testaments. In every case, they went against the conventional and popular wisdom of those in power. They challenged the powerful and the masses of the people who uncritically went along with whatever the leaders told them. The prophets were frequently castigated and they were branded disloyal for not praising the State. Even though Israel was officially a bureaucracy, a nation under God, the Israelite kings would have preferred that the prophets had simply been religious.

Just bless us and pray for us and save their critique for those godless nations that surrounded them. Kings, and potentates and presidents and governors, mayors, it's still the same. Quiet the prophets and brand them disloyal or unpatriotic. But a prophet only prophesies in her or his own country, challenging only one's own nation, to live in accordance for God's vision for the just society no matter how politically inconvenient that may be. The prophets did this because they loved the nation, not because they hated it. So, critique - critique is demanded of the people of God. That will help us.

Three. We need people of courage to call out the pernicious racist language, the perniciousness, rather, of racist language whenever you encounter it, privately or publicly. Now, to do this will require some insights into the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance when it comes to race in America. Cognitive dissonance.

Let me just give you an example of it. We don't have time to go through all, there are a lot of good studies about this. It basically is, you know something is true, and you encounter something that makes it not true, so you readjust your thinking to make the original not true.

Example. I do not support-- here is statement number one. I do not support racist language. Statement number two. Sometimes the president of the United States uses racist language. Then statement number three. Therefore, I must do everything in my power to make it seem that that was not racist language because I support the president. I think I messed up there. Statement one, I do not support racist language. Statement two, I support the president and they're lots of good reasons to support the president-- It may be your political philosophy, social limit. Third, the president uses racist language sometimes.

How do you put all those three together? I don't support racist language; I support the president and the president does that. What happens in a cognitive dissonance is that you try to rework in your mind what that language is to make it seem like it's not racist. Because you support him and that you don't support racism.

We go through these mental gyrations so much. What I'm going to say to you and especially to our white brothers and sisters, when the masses of people of brown and black color say that was racist, you might want to believe them and say, "What is it that I'm not seeing here?" Guess what? It's not your fault. It's the ocean you swim in and we all swim in. And we have to constantly fight that.

What I say to my Republican friends -- I have friends, really good friends - I have friends who are for the Republican Party. I have friends who are for the Democrats and I'm for my friends.

What I say to them, "Okay, if you then support, in this instance the president of the United States, then you have a double and triple responsibility to call out when he is misbehaving or speaking in a way that's not befitting a moral person." You have a double responsibility. Don't leave it up to black persons to speak out against racist behavior and language.

If you don't see it there are some great books back there. There are great materials out there, there's anti-racism training, there are ways that we can help you to see and understand things in a way that our society would prefer you not to see.

So – civil conversations, critique of systems and institutions, calling out racist language and behaviors.

Here's the last and the one I'm going to spend just a little more time with. We need to repay the debt. We need to repay the debt in America. We need to make at least a down payment on the debt. I don't in this sense mean the national debt, for some what I know-- Again, I'm not aligned with any political party, but I'm

amazed that 10 years ago for the Republican party the debt was a big huge problem and now I don't hear anything about it. The debt is now 1.2 trillion dollars a year. I'm going to get back to that.

I'm talking about the debt long overdue that this nation has owed for almost 400 years of slavery and racial oppression. I was raised in church. Large black Baptist Church. Mt. Bethel black Baptist Church, Washington DC. I'm still invited to go back there and preach every once in a while. They want to make sure that the Episcopal church hasn't hurt me too much.

[laughter]

I was raised Baptist. That means I sang, clapped, stomped, shouted my way into the faith.

Now, of course, I'm an Episcopalian. But even Katie Sherrod can't keep me from moving around. I need a podium sometimes to stay put.

What about this debt? Here's what I learned in Sunday School. If you steal something from somebody, you pay it back. Or you make restitution. And if you don't make restitution, you have no hope for reconciliation. That's the shorthand for what I'm about to tell you.

Why do I think this is important? We have some evidence of why this is important. Despite their generally negative assessments of the current state of race relations, the Pew Research showed in April this year, Americans tend to say that most racial and ethnic groups get along fairly well with one another. Among those who gave an answer, about six in 10 or more, say this is the case for whites and Asians. Whites and Asians get along fairly well. Eighty-eight percent say those groups get along very well.

Hispanics and Asians, 73% say they get along pretty well. Similar high percentages between blacks and Hispanics, whites and Hispanics, blacks and Asians. Huge majorities of people say, "Well, they get along pretty well, but there is one group." Assessments for how well blacks and whites get along is more problematic. Fifty-one percent say these groups get along well while 49% say they don't get along well. It's by far the lowest percentages. Whites are far more positive than blacks in their views for how the two groups get along, and I think that's because as long as things are in the level of 'let's be nice and civil', you'll think things are pretty good. But then dig underneath the surface - there's a lot of rage. There's a significant gap. The question is why? What is the problem between whites and blacks in America? I wonder what happened in our nation for that to be a big problem. Well, we all know the answer.

1619

In 1619, Africans were brought to this shore in Virginia and they were robbed. They were robbed of their humanity, of their dignity and of their livelihood. And for the next 250 years, except for a few free blacks in the North, people of African descent in this nation worked two-and-a-half centuries. They built up this nation, on plantations, and provided wealth, created wealth. They received none of it. And then in 1865, the Civil War ended. "What are we going to do about slavery?"

There were people who started writing about what should we do with-- one day these slaves will be free, but free to what and for what? There is no education, they have no wealth, they have no land, they have no prospect for sustaining themselves.

One proposal is by General Sherman that he wrote to President Lincoln, he proposed 40 acres and a mule. "Forty acres, give them that." Okay, for 250 years of robbery, all right, at least that's something. This nation couldn't even do that.

And in one of the great acts -- I don't think we give enough attention to what a person by the name of John Wilkes Booth -- the effect he had on this nation. His grave is in the cemetery, Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore, and there are still people who put flags, Confederate flags at his gravesite there to honor him.

Here's what happened. At Ford's Theater, Lincoln is dead. The Vice President, Johnson, was a strict segregationist - 40 acres and a mule went right off the table.

Just think what difference it may have made in this nation if some attempt were made to say, "Not only we're sorry, but here's something to get you started." And there have been other attempts made and things written about. In 1890, there was a-- was he from Missouri, I think it was, this one senator or congressman-- I'm sorry, I don't have that written down here. It's in some of those books back there.

Editor's note: In 1890, Rep. William J. Connell, R-Neb., introduced a bill to provide pensions to former slaves. It called for an initial payment of \$500, followed by payments of \$15 per month to every former slave age 70 or older, with smaller payments on a sliding scale to younger ex-slaves. The bill went nowhere, but associations to support such efforts attracted memberships in the hundreds of thousands. From Mary Frances Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations* (2005), p. 34;

He proposed that there be a pension established for freed slaves for their generations of work give them a pension, and of course, the business community kind of liked that. It was a way for them to get more money and they'd have to buy things from the white business community. But those proposals went to nowhere. They've gone nowhere for them ever since.

For the next 110 years after slavery, this nation as a nation did everything in its power to make sure that black people would not get good education, would not get good jobs, would not get good housing, would not get good health care, and then at the end of the Civil Rights era, it says, "Okay, we were wrong, we're all equal now."

Three hundred fifty-plus years of theft, robbery. The nation still hasn't officially made an apology for that. We apologize for a number of different issues, and there's also been reparations paid to some other groups. It's not a new concept in the world. Germany has paid -- it's estimated to be -- and this is Germany, about \$90 billion to the Jewish community for the Holocaust. Japanese were imprisoned, in World War II and in camps in America. And during the Reagan Administration they said, "That was wrong. They lost a lot of wealth in those three to four years." And so, there was a fund and they were paid, the Japanese.

There was no outcry against reparations, and black people know that. There wasn't a big thing of, "Why are we paying them?" No, it was a matter of justice. But when it comes to African-Americans, "No, we can't talk about reparations."

Well, we're going to talk about reparations. Some say, "Well, wait a minute, bishop. What about forgiveness?" That was all in the past, and by the way, I had nothing to do with it and my family didn't have anything to do with it. Well, I'm all for forgiveness. In fact, most Americans, most black Americans, have forgiven this nation a long time ago.

We're not against this nation, so for what it's worth, we forgive you. We're here, we're patriotic. In fact, African-Americans are the most patriotic of all Americans. We fought for this nation in wars when this nation did not fight for us, and by the way, don't ever criticize-- I was just on the phone, my cousin, he's going to lay flags down for his father and some others of my family who served this nation in World War II in Korea, and came back and could not get good jobs and housing. Don't talk to me about forgiveness, patriotic.

Don't ever criticize a black person in this nation as being unpatriotic when we criticize and protest America in the ways that we can. And people do it in different ways. When ballplayers take a knee, I'm Anglo Catholic enough to know that because you kneel doesn't mean -- that's not a sign of disrespect. That was a protest, it's a protest, and so you may not like the action, but at least understand what the action is about. Descendants of slaves are some of the most loyal Americans you will ever find.

We're not leaving, we're not going back to whatever racist derogatory name you can give to the countries our black ancestors came from, and I know it sounds a lot like I'm picking on our president here, but when you have a leader who's saying, "Send them back." Now, he will only say that to people who are black -black and brown skin, it's never a white skinned person, "Send them back." And rat-infested hellholes are never in that part of my diocese that is even poorer than most poor parts of Baltimore and Appalachia.

Those are white communities, it's never - they're never rat infested. Rats, that's for Jews and blacks. He said, "Send them back." No, we're not going back unless white

people go back first. You go back to where you came from. How many generations has your family been here? Mine since the early 19th century. Now, we aim to stick around, we're not going anywhere. We want to make you squirm, we'll make America squirm as long as we possibly can until you live up, you meaning all of us, live up to - our soaring creeds about freedom and justice for all. By the way, you're welcome.

Why Reparations?

The word we use to make restitution and to fix the problem is the R word, reparation. Don't let that word scare you. It's a word that kicks up a lot of emotion in people. It's often mischaracterized and largely misunderstood. It's a complex subject that involves economic, political, and moral dimensions that are difficult to grasp without a willingness to engage more deeply, than having a quick emotional response to the word. Reparations quite simply means to repair, repair that which has been broken. It is not just about monetary compensation. An act of reparation is an attempt to make whole again. To restore. To offer atonement for sins. To make amends. To reconcile a wrong or an injury.

Everyone living in our great nation has inherited a mess created by the institution of slavery and racism. None of us caused this mess. None of us caused this brokenness, but all of us have a moral responsibility to fix it. For generations-- Well, I'm skipping ahead. Okay. 10 minutes.

Reparations, Isaiah 58. The prophet says, *"Why do you fast? Is not this the fast that I choose to loosen the bonds of injustice? To undo the bonds of the yoke? To let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your houses? When you see the naked to cover them and not to hide yourself from them? If we remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, then the Lord will guide you and continually satisfy your needs and parched places. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations. You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets to live in."*

How do we repair the breach that we find ourselves in?

We can see better what reparations means by describing what it is not.

First, it is not throwing money at the problem of racism. I find that image offensive. When people talk about throwing money at someone or something, it's almost always referring to the poor. You throw money at the poor, or paper towels or whatever, you just throw it at them. That's the meaning. Especially the black and brown people, you throw money at them.

I have been in some great Episcopal schools in Maryland, and some of the toniest schools around. I never, though, have heard of rich school districts - I never heard of people saying, "We're throwing money at these students." Or that, "We're throwing money at St. Paul's schools. We're throwing money at St. Timothy." They

have great facilities, lots of money, and I know the millions that are involved. We never throw money at the rich, we only throw money at the poor. So whenever the conversation comes to having those same resources available to black and brown students, then we hear, "Oh we can't throw money at them."

No, reparations instead is an emotionally healthy effort to repair a broken system that results in broken lives. Some of that effort involves money, but it's not all about money.

Second, reparations is not a transfer of money from white people to black people. I do not want a check from white people, none of the white friends that I know want a check from white people, that's not what it's about. Rather, it's what this generation does to repair the damage that previous generations caused. It is the commitment of an entire country to repair and heal the mess that we've all inherited. If there is money involved, and you're not going to make restitution on the cheap. If you think that race relations are fine in America, do nothing. Do nothing, but if you want to get better, it ain't going to be on the cheap. If it does involve money, and it shall, then I'm paying in the reparations. Recent immigrants are paying in the reparations. Asians, Latinos, white persons, those who can trace their lineage to slave owners and those who can't, because we're all in this mess, and it'll take all of us to get out of it.

Third, reparations is not writing a check to individual black citizens of the United States. For one thing, and President Obama was right about this, it's unworkable. For instance, how do you define race? Race is a biological genetic fiction. The social construct, so I don't want to get to those things on, "Well, is that person really black? What part of their family can you retrace to slavery?" That's unworkable. [Audio blurred]

Reparations then, is a serious and sustained effort to strategically fund initiatives, that are geared to counteract systems that leave millions of black residents entrapped in communities of poverty, crime and despair.

The fact that there are millions of our brothers and sisters in these communities is not an accident. Do not blame the victim. Do people make bad choices? Yeah, and we get after them all the time, but it is not the fault of most individuals who happen to be born in these communities that they cannot succeed. I would like to take you to some nursing homes where there are elderly black women languishing in these places with no money, no wealth, nothing ever handed down, and it's not an accident that they're there. You want to talking about reparations, let's find some widows in these nursing homes. I see them. Just as we're working with young people, we also go to nursing homes.

The system is constantly working against them on so many fronts, and only a few facing superhuman odds are able to get out.

So what would some of those efforts look like? You tell me. Let's all figure it out. When I testified that Congress to establish commissions called H.R.40. It's been introduced in Congress every year for the last 30-some years. It gets nowhere. It's to establish a commission bipartisan, Blue Ribbon Commission to study the issue of reparations and make recommendations for what we can do in this generation. To say, "We stole." We stole money out of the black community, how can we put wealth back into the black community? It doesn't have to be government programs.

I've been working with private industry, corporations and others for jobs, housing, education. Yes, let's begin with education. Let's go to the schools and the broken-down schools where I am. Try job training and jobs, then go to housing. Then go to environmental sustainability. Then go to nursing homes. Yes, there are things that need funding, but there's no will.

Fourth and lastly, reparations is not financial assistance. It is the payment of a debt that is still owed by the nation, not by individuals. What are we talking about? By the way, reparations, I said it's not new. After the Civil War, there was another form of reparations - that was to many slave owners who've lost money in their lands. There's a great history of reparations in this nation, just not to black people. I wonder why?

What will it cost?

What should it cost? I can throw out a figure for the nation. Five hundred billion dollars. Yes, 500 billion.

When it comes to reparations, we need some truth telling. People heal when there is some truth telling. We need to recognize that when it comes to the economic gap between blacks and whites in America, it comes from a great injustice.

How do I come to 500 billion? Well, if you did 40 acres and a mule for everybody, it's gazillions of dollars. By the way, how do you pay a community for 350 plus years of thievery? You can't do it.

Here's why I say 500 - one, how much did our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Middle East cost us? Last 15 years? Well, we have the figure and the government gave it out. It's about \$5.6 trillion. Trillion. There are many who believe that that money did not accomplish what we wanted to in Afghanistan and Iraq, and it has not made this country safer nor Americans. I said our annual debt is 1.2 trillion every year, and we absorb that, we absorb that.

Five hundred billion is one half a year of our national debt for almost 400 years of slavery, segregation, degradation. It's a bargain.

It's a bargain. What could be done with that? I'm looking at rebuilding of schools, I'm looking at scholarships, I'm looking at job training opportunities, I'm looking at job creation opportunities. It's a bargain.

Can the faith community take the lead?

Finally, lastly, on this matter of reparations, why can't the faith community take the lead in speaking out for these efforts? It was the faith community that so often took the lead in the Civil Rights Movement in getting the nation to end the odious racial segregation laws. It was one of the church's finest hours. It was one of The Episcopal Church's finest hours. Let's have another good hour, The Episcopal Church, taking the lead here.

The Diocese of Maryland did it in May, this year took a big step. I know if the Diocese of Maryland can do it, Diocese of Maryland can do it, then America can do it. Diocese of Maryland took a vote in May to affirm the principle of reparations. By the way, I didn't start that conversation in Maryland. It was started by many of our white clergy and others who said, "We know that a good number of the resources that we have today are due to slavery and segregation." We recounted the history of the churches, and our role as a church, and racial segregation, and redlining, and all of that.

We're working right now on a dollar figure and it's probably going to be about a million dollars for us. That's going to be costly, but, oh boy, when the world hears that people of faith are investing in the poor black community as a way of saying, "We're doing our part to help repair." So let's take the lead again. This country has a number of great attributes and here's one of them -- we have the ability to self-correct. We need to correct here. We all love, this conference is about the way of love. We know what love is, like we read-- we recited some of Paul last night on what that love means. It's not about ourselves, it's about others.

We know that we've come to acknowledge that there can be no love without justice. There cannot be love without justice. There can be no justice without some form of repairing an injustice. I believe that America is now at the point of being able to do this long overdue work and I'm going to believe that the Episcopal Church is going to take the lead. Thank you, my brothers and sisters.

[applause]

Q&A

Tracie Middleton [Trinity, Fort Worth]: I'm wondering if there are things that we could be doing now to prepare for the General Convention coming to Baltimore in a couple of years -- to be supportive of what's going on in your diocese. One of the things that I'm working with is the Association for Episcopal Deacons. You have Lauren Welch and Chris McCloud, and we had a good conversation at our recent

triennial about ways that we can be strategizing for that. I'm just wondering what ideas you might have around what we could be doing when we all get there?

Bishop Sutton: Well, thank you, and I hope y'all come. Everybody come to Baltimore. It's really a great place. You will be fine there where the convention is and Convention Center.

Yes, there's a lot going on and what we can do to prepare yourself. As we get closer to convention, you'll be hearing more, right now plans are being made. One of them - the diocese usually has a Maryland night to show off some things, a diocesan night. I think we're going to have several sites where people can visit and see what's happening there and we're also looking on the Sunday morning. Everybody who wants to walk with us, we're going to walk from the Convention Center, to Lafayette Square where the presiding bishop was rector, St. James Lafayette Square - and have a rally in that big park there.

Right there in the 'hood. That'd be interesting to see some hundreds, if not thousands of Episcopalians walking the streets. But there are people in our diocese - members of our diocese who regularly take walks around some pretty mean streets in Baltimore. People appreciate the attention that's given. You'll be hearing more and more about that. Yes.

Bill Stanford [St. Christopher, Fort Worth]: I'm taking part in some interracial conversations in Fort Worth. And they were really good. Basically, because I came away from it, with much greater appreciation now complex problems are, problems like gentrification, especially as Fort Worth grows it's happening right before our eyes. But what I realized as I sat around the table with some dignitaries from the African American community was I thought - what presumption of me, to be here in this conversation because what you've been through, I can't even imagine and for, I don't know as a white man—you may have noticed I'm a white guy. How do I start being involved with that without putting myself in the position of, "Well, I'm going to lay all my goodness on you," and humbly approach this whole thing and be in the right place? Do you know what I'm saying?

Bishop Sutton: I think so. I'm thinking of a couple of things. One is some issues of guilt that I think a lot of Americans want to do. I don't think we need to feel guilty in history. We have guilt for our own actions. I think we should just be ashamed that we are in a nation that still has that unfinished work. I would like to say it's a national shame, but I know a way out of shame. We say it every Sunday, "Most Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you by thought and by deed by when we have done and by what we have left undone." Let's get to the "left undone" part, that's one. Thank you for having those conversations, a lot of them are uncomfortable, but we love it when white people want to have those conversations, and it's not about your personal guilt you have-- just God bless you for doing it. I

know a way out of shame, but this is not about guilt, my gosh, this is about we all being ashamed and we're going to do something about it. Yes, ma'am.

Suzi Robertson [Good Shepherd, Granbury]: Thank you, Bishop. . . I was the first white person with the Diocese at Texas to serve at an historic black church as rector. Nobody ever walked out on me and I knew nothing when I went there, I knew nothing. Would you extend a courtesy to the clergy who are in this room who, when we preach this stuff, we start getting the phone calls from the leadership of the church, saying, "So and so walked out." "So and so walked out." "So and so walked out." How do we care for ourselves against that kind of pressure?

Bishop Sutton: That is a huge problem. I'm glad you're raised it. A few things. For my testimony in Congress and on Fox News, who my brother Tucker Carlson mischaracterized something I said. I talked about the souls of black folk and the souls of white folk are one and the same things and that this will be healing for the souls of white folk as much as black folk. And so, he did this big thing, "Bishop of the Episcopal Church said that the souls of white people are in danger unless they are supporting reparations." That was unfortunate.

But I got death threats. We had to call the police, the diocesan offices got threats for speaking about reparations and all of that, so there is some cost.

You can be helped by referring to statements, the Episcopal Church has made some good statements at General Convention about restorative justice even about the principle of reparations, it's just none of the diocese is taking them up on that. You can refer to a bishop's statements, and you can say, you can just reprint some things I have written and others and you don't have to say it. Because guess what? Bishops are given more license to speak out on things than parish clergy. You have to be around to do the pastoral work and all that, so don't do all the heavy lifting on your own.

Then the last thing, it's always a personal call for everyone, but how many white Episcopal clergy lost their jobs in the civil rights movement? How many lost for speaking out against the war in Vietnam? How many lost for speaking out for women's ordination and rights? How many have lost, and in this room, for speaking out for the full inclusion of all God's people, all the baptized, no matter their sexual orientation? Welcome to the club.

[laughter]

Bishop Sutton: It's just going to be loss, loss, loss, but in the long run, the next generations will look back at that and say, "Thank you." And you will be resting in peace.

Cindy Ruiz [Good Shepherd, Granbury and the Kaleidoscope Institute]: I was wondering how we as Episcopalians can lead the way . . . in this, including an

examination of wealth of the Episcopal Church and some of the Episcopal Pension Fund that owes its resources also to . . .

Bishop Sutton: Of course, it's going to cost something. A lot of it is, you want to say, making down payments on a debt. But what Virginia seminary last month said, "We're going to put aside a million point seven in the name of reparations to repair the damage." Now, Virginia Seminary has got a lot of money and so I'm not worried about them financially, but that has a huge psychological and emotional effect. And so for the Episcopal Church, if the Episcopal Church as a whole said, "We're going to set aside \$2 million, even if we're just investing in a poor black community, it could have a large effect, I think it should be something that affects all of us and for the church pension fund, if it means that I'm going to get \$10 less a month, that's going to hurt, it's not going to hurt me as much as many other clergy.

You're not going to do racial reconciliation on the cheap, it ought to cost you something, it ought to cost all of us something for the privilege of living in this great country. Even if you're a recent immigrant you have-- And I talk this, so we do services on Sunday morning in five languages in Maryland I talked to them, they're all on one board for this thing of reparations, they didn't cause any of this, but they know that we're in a mess.

That's why in May, that vote for reparations was unanimous in the diocese A 90% white diocese, conservative and liberal, Republican, Democrat, Appalachian, urban, it was 100%. Once people get educated and they know what reparations is and what it's not, they do the right thing. I rambled a bit, but I hope I addressed some of what you were saying.

Well, thank you all.

Love, love, love. All about love.