

Friday, March 28: Wake Up Everybody

*Written by Bayo Ogungbade, Associate Pastor of Adult Discipleship, Reveille United Methodist Church,
Richmond, VA*

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5kQ2ZEav7TgUoLSLrm7h8S?si=33c65ea157404bd0>

“The world won't get no better if we just let it be....

The world won't get no better.... we gotta change it yeah, just you and me...”

I've long wondered what the immediate internal dialogue of Jesus was like before he was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Was he happy? Was he sentimental? Was he content? Even though we'll never know this, we DO know that Jesus knew that the world wouldn't get any better if things were just left as they were. Back then, the world was full of sinful people driven by selfishness, greed, envy, anger, lust, and other sinful passions. Humanity was disconnected from God, as the seeds of the Original Sin caused by the actions of Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden had caused generational ramifications across centuries of humanity and still was. Jews & Gentiles alike were chasing their own idols, whether it was Pharisees and their often self-centered adherence to the Torah for the sake of public acceptance or nonbelievers who worshiped Caesar and the Roman gods. Humanity was lost, divided, polarized, and focused on all of the wrong things.

In some ways, our 21st century world today has some parallels with many of the previously named sentiments in the time of Jesus. Sin runs amok in our world too, whether it's through the greed-filled idolization of societal capitalism, “holy wars” raging overseas that have caused the death or displacement of millions of people, the rise of Christian Nationalism, the danger-filled silos we put ourselves in by only surrounding ourselves with people who think and/or look like us, and even attacks on the shared Image of God that we were created in, whether it's our race, age, gender, or place of origin. In the same vein, just as it was when Jesus roamed the Earth, our 21st century world can also arguably be labeled as lost, divided, polarized, and focused on all the wrong things. Still nonetheless, Jesus cared for humanity and the world so much that he gave himself up for us, not for the sake of himself, but for the betterment of all people in the world. Even in light of our sins and shortcomings, he didn't want to just leave us be - he wanted to help us BE BETTER. Jesus choosing to be baptized wasn't the only significant decision he made for the betterment of all people. Everything he did was for the betterment of all people and it was all out of unconditional love, undeserved grace, and unyielding faith.

*In this Lenten season, I want to invite you to first listen to the song, “Wake Up Everybody,” by Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes. In this song, you will hear an action-filled plea that empowers and encourages people of all gifts and graces to rise up and make the world a better place. Teachers, doctors, anyone and everyone - we all as people have to wake up and choose to make the world a better place. The next thing I want to invite you to do is to *DO SOMETHING about our world*. You have gifts, graces, skills, talents, knowledge, and many uniquely God-given tools to change the world. If you care*

for the Earth, take care of God's creation through planting and watering. If you care for your neighbors, write kind notes or say something kind to someone every day. If you have a heart to serve, then serve those who are less fortunate than you. If your gift is prayer, then be in prayer for others, especially for those who can't find the words to pray for themselves, and even, pray for those who persecute you.

It's time to wake up, everybody. The world won't get any better if we continue to let it be. Our world is still full of sinful, broken, and lost people. However, even against the overwhelming challenges of the time, Jesus still woke up every day and carried his cross. As Christians who follow Jesus, we must not only focus on waking ourselves up, but to wake up EVERYBODY so that together, we can ALL make the world a better place.