

Many Mansions

May 10, 2020 | Jesus Files: Mysteries of the Resurrection | Pastor Katie Matson-Daley

When authors and directors create a mystery story for us, they often set the story, or at least a part of the story in a mansion. One of my favorite mystery movies is *Clue* the 1985 movie stars Tim Curry as the butler in the mansion of Mr. Boddy and is based loosely on the board game with the same name. But the mansion is as much of a character in the film as the suspects. Was it Professor Plum in the Library? Mrs. Peacock in the billiard room? Col. Mustard in the kitchen?

Even our historic true-life mysteries are set in mansions. You may have visited Glensheen on the shores of Lake Superior in Duluth before, but my family still refers to it as the Congdon Murder Mansion. There is something grand and mysterious about mansions that draw us into the story and expand our curiosity and imagination.

In our scripture today, Jesus says that he goes to prepare a place for us and that in his father's house there are many mansions. Just as in a mystery story, the setting is important. The setting in our kingdom life together is important.

Throughout the season of Easter, we're taking time to explore the mysteries of the resurrection. In today's passage Jesus has not yet been killed, but he speaks of things that will happen after the resurrection. What does it mean that Jesus goes to prepare a place for us?

As Methodist Christians we make sense of the world through scripture, tradition, reason and experience. The experience of mothers preparing a place for their children may shed light on what it means that Jesus goes to prepare a place for us. In honor of Mother's Day, I asked some moms I know what they did to prepare a place for their child.

Becky: Before I gave birth to Elsa, not only did I frantically nest and rid myself of a lot of physical stuff, but I read to her in utero every night, and prepared my heart for the miracle about to happen. I still thank God every day for the miracle that is her.

I wonder if Jesus is delighting in us? I wonder if Jesus is grateful for the miracle that is each of us?

Allison and Cyreta were both pregnant in their last semester of Seminary:

Allison: Finished my Master's thesis!! I submitted my paper two days before Wesley was born.

Cyreta: Lol graduate!

We know that on the cross, Jesus said, IT IS FINISHED! The work is done, the paper is turned in.

Rebecca and Cat both adopted older kids with trauma in their early history. They spoke of doing a lot of research in trauma and child development and making an emotional and spiritual commitment to their children and putting the needs of their children before their own.

Lots of mothers spoke of painting, cleaning, setting up cribs, washing clothes, child proofing the house. My college roommate, a chaplain in San Diego, remodeled her bathroom in the 8th month. I remember seeing sledgehammers and buckets of grout and her 8 month pregnant belly on Facebook last year.

Two mothers on bed rest mentioned gratitude for friends and family who helped set up the nursery and do housework when they couldn't, but also feeling sad that someone else was doing the work and they couldn't participate.

I believe that God delights in rebuilding a broken world to prepare a place for us, not only in the world to come but in this world today.

I believe that we participate in the God who dwells in Jesus when we prepare a place in the world where everyone belongs, where everyone has enough, where everyone is safe. Where everyone has access to good health.

We've seen this week how racism costs people their lives. We've seen this week where lack of access to safe working conditions has cost people their lives.

Two of our United Methodist General Agencies, *The General Board of Church and Society* and *The General Commission on Religion and Race* issued a joint statement this week that I would like to read to you today:

The February killing of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia is another incident that torchlights the darkest moments of our history. The recurrence of these killings, coupled with the fact that justice is seldom served, is a strong indication of how deeply entrenched racism is in our society's systems and beliefs.

Eric Garner, Terence Crutcher, Philando Castile, Samuel DuBose, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, and Walter Scott are few of the many innocent black lives who have been killed by police officers. **The incomplete list of the named and unnamed indicates the pervasive culture of racism and white supremacy in America.**

While arrests have finally been made in the first step towards a judicial process to Mr. Arbery's case, **the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) and General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) of The United Methodist Church vehemently condemn racism and white supremacy as sin** and also enjoin the Justice Department to look into the situation without any iota of fear or favor.

Many black households teach black children and youths to observe humiliating precaution in a culture that recklessly takes human life. It appears that the race of men of color now serves as a premise for the infliction of violence and in unfortunate cases like Mr. Arbery's, the loss of life.

Safety and security must be exercised in all communities and not deny equity to communities of color while positively privileging white communities. White supremacy must be eradicated. **It is imperative for the white community to advance beyond mere statements condemning racially motivated violence.** Policies must be adopted and implemented to ensure that incidents like the killing of Mr. Arbery are properly addressed, and recurrences are prevented.

We call on United Methodists to work for the complete eradication of racism, and promotion of justice and fairness as core principles that guide the enforcement of law and order. GBCS and GCORR call for improved efforts towards the safety of every life regardless of race or cultural group.

Erin Hawkins, General Secretary of GCORR states:

“More decisive action to resist and dismantle racism is needed at every level of The United Methodist Church. This action must go beyond our historically empty rhetoric about repentance and broken promises to be a church that is a credible and active

witness for peace, equity and justice in the face of harm visited upon communities of color. We need informed, equipped and committed clergy and laity to unapologetically shine the light of truth in their homes, workplaces, churches and communities, by declaring racism as sin and actively pursuing God's desire for all to live in safety and freedom."

Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary of GBCS states:

"The United Methodist Social Principles name racism as sin and state that racism 'is antithetical to the gospel itself.' (§162A) My white brothers and sisters need to recognize our complicity in the culture of systemic racism and condemn white supremacy as sin. Churches must continue to address racism within their own communities. The words 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done' will only be realized when we address the root causes of racism that pervade all aspects of our society."

We hope and pray that through cooperative efforts, working together, raised awareness, policy-making, and genuine change in culture of white privilege, that black men and women like Ahmaud Arbery are no longer hashtags trending on Twitter, but recognized for who they truly are: **children of God, created in the image of God.**

So in honor of our mothering God, this Mother's Day, let's prepare a place, in our homes, in our church, in our town, in our state, in our country and in our world where all of God's children have the opportunity to thrive.