



First Corinthians

15:39, NRSV

“Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.”

What is race?

Race began as a theory about human being and belonging, a gross generalization about persons of different ethnicities and nationalities based solely on physicality. David Hume said in 1742,

“I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all other species of men to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was any civilized nation of any complexion (sic) than white, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation.”

Created during the European “Enlightenment” period, race categorized people and people groups according to their physical features, predetermined their social value (inferior/ superior) and forced a social position (center or marginal, visible/ invisible) for capitalistic consumption and political exploitation.

A pseudo- scientific system of classifying human beings, race was used to justify the intellectual, physical and spiritual supremacy of Europeans and later socially colored white people in North America. Brian Bantum said **race “is a word made flesh.”** It is the four- letter word humans have chosen to embody. Isabel Wilkerson referred to race as a caste system, writing: “A caste system is an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups.” Caste systems predate race.

Though select biblical passages were used to justify “the peculiar institution” of American slavery, there is no biblical basis for race or its progeny. There is no biological justification either as humans were traced to a common ancestor named Lucy, located in Hadar, Ethiopia in 1974. The Human Genome Project also found that human beings are 98- 99% genetically identical. Consequently, it is as Paul said to the believers at Corinth, “There is one flesh for human beings” (15:31, NRSV).

