

Thinking Aloud . . .

When friends and family come to our home for dinner, everyone is asked to contribute to the conversation.

At Christmas people shared special Christmas memories: a most memorable gift or family tradition. At Thanksgiving we shared the obvious: something for which we were each most profoundly thankful. Actually it is something of a custom that guests expect.

So, with a table full of friendly faces for my birthday, someone wondered what the question would be. Taken a little off-guard I hesitated and then the questioner asked his own question: Since this was Martin Luther King weekend, maybe we should all share an example of our personal prejudice!

Wow! That put us on the spot. But without prodding people around the table began to acknowledge (confess?) the prejudice in our lives. Maybe it sounds like a downer to you, but actually it was quite helpful and positive as we clarified what prejudice is and how subtle but hurtful it can be.

When you see news clips of children being “hosed” by police in the 1960’s, or movies like *When We Were Colored* or *The Hurricane*, prejudice is so graphic and ugly that it is offensive to almost all of us. Prejudice in those cases is easily identifiable and because someone else has been guilty we call easily for justice. But as Jesus pointed out in the story of the Good Samaritan, prejudice is not always so obvious and is often excused.

This is David Thomas thinking aloud “how true it is that God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10.34) and that he exhorts us, “don’t show favoritism” (James 2.1). There is one God, one Creator of us all. He is the God of Abraham and Jesus; the God of all people, all ethnic groups, all nations.

Prejudice is a tricky vice. Prejudice hides beneath our euphemisms and glib generalizations. Prejudice influences our expectations of others and the willingness to accept them. Prejudice colors the interpretations of motive and our definition of neighbor. Prejudice twists our assumptions, withholds forgiveness, and points an unwarranted accusing finger. Prejudice is not limited to matters of religion, race, gender, or age.

Always prejudice is much easier to see in someone else than in us.