



A Self-Paced Study Guide for
the Presbytery of East Iowa

"Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world.

And ready to fight for it."

- Arundati Roy

WEEK ONE - Theme for the Week

Surfaces and Depths

Readings from *Caste*

PART ONE: TOXINS IN THE PERMAFROST AND HEAT RISING ALL AROUND

Ch. 1 – The Afterlife of Pathogens

Ch. 2 – An Old House and an Infrared Light

Scriptural Contexts

Matthew 7:1-5

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Genesis 1:27

So God created humans in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

2 Corinthians 10:7

Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.

Questions for Reflection

1. At the beginning of *Caste*, author Isabel Wilkerson shares the image of one lone dissenter amidst a crowd of Germans giving the Nazi salute. What would it mean—and what would it take—to be this person in today's culture? Could you be this person—why or why not?
2. Wilkerson compares the toxicity of racial relations in America to a dormant Siberian virus (anthrax) that re-emerges. Since we have current experience with the tenacity of viral

infection, how does this comparison speak to the pervasive idea that racism has been eradicated in American culture?

3. How do caste systems function and continue over time? How can we learn from our personal and cultural histories?

Action Steps

It might be helpful to you to write in a journal or commit to weekly discussion with a group of people that you know well and trust, starting with where you are each week. How are you feeling - physically, mentally, spiritually? Where is God showing up in your life? What do you hear the Spirit saying to you? As we move through this study, the journal/discussion might help you track how you are doing, what the growing edges are and where Jesus is showing up.

Dig deep each day, perhaps you may feel moved to write prayers of confession and consider the questions of the baptismal liturgy, in the order in which they are given - renunciation, profession, living/discipleship – as you think through the issues that Wilkerson raises. Here are the baptismal questions:

Q1: "Do you renounce evil and its power in the world?"

Q2: "Who is your Lord and Savior?"

Q3: "Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love?"