THIS IS WHO WE ARE

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Category: Observations

It will come as no surprise to regular readers of this blog that one of my favourite passages in Scripture is the opening section of Acts 13 when Paul and Barnabas are sent out to proclaim the gospel.

> *Now in the church at AntiochÂ there were prophetsÂ and teachers: Barnabas,Â Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene,Â Manaen (who had been brought up with HerodÂ the tetrarch) and Saul.Â While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said,Â â€œSet apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the workÂ to which I have called them.â€ Â So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on themÂ and sent them off.*
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> *Acts 13: 1-3*

However, rather than focus on the pneumatology or ecclesiology of mission, today I'd like to focus on one small phrase: "Simeon called Niger". One of the prophets and teachers at Antioch was a black man. The interesting thing is that we know next to nothing about Simeon, apart from his colour. Luke just mentions this in passing along with the fact that Manaen had grown up in the Judean court and Lucius came from Syrene. Without making a big thing of it, Luke points out that the church in Antioch had leaders from a variety of backgrounds - which is exactly what you would expect in a large cosmopolitan city.

That one of the church leaders was black should come as no surprise to us, after all one of the first converts from outside of Palestine was an Ethiopian court official. From its outset the church has been ethnically diverse and this will be displayed in all its glory when people from every tribe, tongue and nation gather round the throne of the Lamb.

Racism or any form of ethnic superiority has no place in the church; it is a fundamental denial of who we are and of the reality of the body of Christ geographically and historically.

Oh, and it has no place in football stadia, either.

Post image is from the Brick Testament.