

Sermon Sunday 6 7 20 Trinity

This is usually a Sunday set aside for celebrating the Trinity. The Trinity - a Christian doctrine that holds that God is one God, but three coeternal consubstantial persons or hypostases—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I lost you at hypostases, didn't I? Don't worry, most Christians are satisfied that the Trinity is a mystery. I'm pretty well satisfied with that myself. Most kids are satisfied with "Your mom is your mom, right? But, she is also a (teacher, store clerk, civic leader, pick one) and maybe a wife or partner too. See? Mom being three persons! That explanation works up to a point and it's helpful. But more on that subject at another time.

Because we have other, more immediate matters that concern us today as Christians. Let me introduce them with a couple of reminders. I am here at Church of the Good Shepherd to be your spiritual leader. I am here to remind you that it's important to have a spiritual leader to both lead and challenge you. I am here to remind you that God loves us unconditionally, no matter what. And also to remind you that God loves the entire world - everybody - unconditionally, no matter what. And no, that is not just pie-in-the-sky stuff. That is real. And it's getting more real all the time these days. It needs to be more real all the time. Because God's unconditional love is pretty much the bottom line. And we need to believe that.

We are living in challenging times. We may well ask, "What's Next?" We don't know. Everything we thought we could count on seems to be teetering. Does that mean we cling to the past, to what we remember, to what we used to be able to count on? Or does that mean we choose to be courageous, to reach out, to trust? It's all very scary isn't it?

Recently, my hometown of Minneapolis, MN - a place I always thought of as safe, as Minnesota-midwestern-sensible, boring even, became a place of great sorrow and anger. I was shocked. This isn't the Minneapolis I thought I knew. But then, I'm a white woman from Northeast Minneapolis, across the river from North Minneapolis where the black people live, far from the Powderhorn Park area where George Floyd was killed. Well, when I was growing up, all those people might as well have been thousands of miles away, on the moon. We never saw them. They weren't in our schools. We lived in a safe white enclave - very similar to Pitman. If you don't watch TV and don't read newspapers, well, we could have the 50s

forever. We lived in blissful ignorance. That's what the community where I grew up was like. And when things happened like the Watts riots, like riots after the death of Martin Luther King, well there were always ways to explain them away. And if we all gave it enough time and just ignored everything, it went away. (Or so we thought.) Someone always came up with a good excuse, a good way to explain it all away, but most important, to allow us to, encourage us to ignore it.

And then I recently read an article with a number of quotes from people who participated in the protests after George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis and this quote from Art Acevedo, a police chief from Houston, quite simply hit me. Chief Acevedo is 55 and he came north to Minneapolis to march with the protestors. He said, "I wish people who don't understand the righteous anger of so many people of color, I wish they could walk with me with the protestors. So they can hear with their own ears, and see with their own eyes the deep pain that especially African-American communities are feeling. Just watching that video, if you don't have indignation, if you try to justify what happened to George Floyd in any way, then you are the problem." It has been a life-altering experience to actually come out and support a community that truly is hurting. I will take these memories with me to my grave."

I recently sent out portions of a letter to you all from our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry. I found it fascinating and uplifting, but for it to be truly uplifting, we have to take it seriously. We need to embrace the possibility of change and work for it. He recommends that we follow the path of love - love as Jesus Christ practiced it, as he teaches us to practice it. No - this isn't pie-in-the sky stuff. This is about taking real love seriously - today - now.

What does love look like? Bishop Curry says "it doesn't look like one man's knee on another man's neck. Love does not look like violence practiced by police or protestors. Love does not look like racialized violence. Violence against any person is violence against a child of God, which is ultimately violence against God. And that is blasphemy, the denial of the God whose love is the root of genuine justice and true human dignity and equality."

More to the point, he says that "*Love does not look like the silence and complicity of too many of us who wish more for tranquility than justice.*"

So, in practical terms, what does love look like? Presiding Bishop Curry says the following, and I agree with him. He says,

“I see us channeling our holy rage into concrete, productive and powerful action.”
“Love looks like calling on officials and demanding that they fulfill their duty to protect the dignity of every child of God.”

“Love looks like making the long-term commitment to racial healing, justice and truth-telling - knowing that without intentional, ongoing intervention on the part of every person of good will, America will cling to its original, racist ways of being. Love looks like working with local police departments to build relationships with the community and develop mechanisms that hold officers accountable.”

“Love looks like all of us — people of every race and religion and national origin and political affiliation — standing up and saying ‘Enough! We can do better than this. We can *be* better than this.’

“What does love look like? I believe that is what Jesus of Nazareth taught us. It looks like the biblical Good Samaritan, an outsider who spends his time and money healing somebody he doesn’t know or even like.”

I know there are those among you who think this sermon is too political. Well, I feel sorry for you. You have apparently attended church for years without hearing what Jesus says to us. Jesus was political. Jesus is political. He championed a society that was essentially communal. He attacked the economic engines of the marketplace when they became unfair and profited only the rich. He championed the poor and disenfranchised. Loving your neighbor and accepting that everyone is your neighbor is political. Let us support a rediscovery of our better selves, our best selves. Let’s renew the national ideals we profess of human equality, liberty and justice for all and take them seriously, take them beyond grade school recitations and into our daily lives. Let us commit to showing the world what love really looks like.