

A HOUSE DIVIDED

In the church, it is Holy Trinity Sunday, a day we normally look upward to contemplate the glorious mysteries of God. But this year the inescapable gravity of our national pain is pulling our vision downward, into the pain and sin and suffering all around us and all through us.

To speak together about these things, we must speak gently now, for we are a people divided in so many ways on on so many issues. And yet we must also speak truthfully.

The images we have seen in these last two weeks will still be in the electronic American History textbooks of our children's future children:

- A white man, wearing the honorable uniform of law and order, yet kneeling on the neck of a black man, George Floyd, until he died.
- A last straw for so many, and so that image has been followed by countless images of a destruction we would have never thought possible to happen to such extent in our country. George Floyd has become a symbol of our national agony over issues long unresolved.

The United States of America is our beloved country. We love our country.

- I quote Paul Tournier who decades ago wrote, "My homeland has a body. It has a soul, the joys and sufferings of its people."
- People, our precious homeland is suffering body and soul from the divisions among us.

When Abraham Lincoln warned our nation that, "A House divided against itself cannot stand," he was quoting Jesus.

- We must come together and find a new way.
- On this Holy Trinity Sunday we must look upward after all, upward to God, upward to God's higher principles of for how humanity can come together to live in unity.

Even in God we see a divine unity, one God existing in a unity of three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Tri-Unity.

- Not everyone is a believer in God, but believers and non-believers alike can still find unity in the pursuit of higher principles, even when disagreeing on the ultimate source of those principles.
- As Micah 6:8 tells us, "God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." Can we not come together in the pursuit of justice, kindness, and humility?

Looking upward to God invariably leads us also to confession.

- Sins must be named truthfully before they can be deal with.
- Yes, the sin of racism is at the root of it. Let this be said clearly also here among us as a church. Racism is a sin.

- The racism of our country has deep roots in our history of black slavery. The United States is less than 250 years old, but our history of black slavery goes back some 400 years. Slavery and our history of slavery also must be named by us as sin.
- We all also need to recognize the truth of what is called “systemic racism.” It’s the way the cards of society and privilege are stacked against people of color and those of black skin in particular.
- If you don’t think that’s real or if you think it is easily overcome by just being good and trying hard, you don’t know enough people yet who can tell you their stories how it is much worse than you realize.
- Yes, of course, all the violent destruction, fires, and looting raging across our precious land, these are sins too. Of course, they also must be condemned and guarded against. But let us make a distinction between the legal protestors and the violent rioters and looters.
- I suspect you’ve grown angry these past couple of weeks, but have you also shed a tear for someone different than you and suffering something you will never suffer?

If you, like me, are white, it’s time for us to listen now. Just listen.

I close with an image of the higher ground we need to aspire to. You maybe saw this too?

- In an angry protest in Louisville, a white police officer was by himself, stranded from the protection of his fellow officers.
- A black man, Darren Lee, a protester himself, noticed this and saw the angry crowd closing in. Not good!
- As Lee told it, “There was already one man who had put himself between the rioters and the officer. I jumped up there with him. Other guys came in and we just formed a barricade. There was also one white man with us as well.”
- Quickly the angry part of the crowd turned their anger on the human chain of men protecting the officer. But these protestors who were now guardians succeeded in ushering that police officer safely back to his crew.
- That police officer later emailed to a reporter, “This group of men were life savers. They were shouting, ‘We won’t let anything happen to you.’”

For all the differences among us, let this be part of the higher vision we aspire to, that we when we see those who are vulnerable, we too would jump in to protect them. “We won’t let anything happen to you.”

That’s the kind of unity that gives us hope that all is not fallen, that goodness is still alive among us.

Jesus loves you. Jesus loves all those others as well. Let’s figure out our way forward together, working for a better world and the healing of our precious nation, and all the while, guarding each other along the way. Amen.