

Tomorrow is Today

June 3, 2020



On Good Friday, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested for a nonviolent march that violated an injunction against parading without a permit. The next day, eight white clergy published an article criticizing King's actions as "unwise and untimely." Dr. King responded with a letter from a Birmingham Jail, which he wrote on pieces of toilet paper and margins of newspapers. That letter is a modern-day epistle. Dr. King said, "You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being."

Unfortunately, those words are as relevant today as they were 57 years ago. Over the last few days, there has been a nationwide outpouring of anger and grief over the death of George Floyd. There have been peaceful demonstrations, with police and protestors kneeling or hugging. There has been rioting and looting, despite a plea from George Floyd's brother, Terrance, to stop the violence. The killing of George Floyd represents far too many injustices over far too many years that were not caught on camera.

How do we respond to all of this? What do we do?

And will it make a difference?

“There was a time,” said Dr. King, “when the church was very powerful, in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.”

We are here for such a time as this.

We are here for such a place as this.

This is our moment to stand in the gap, to be the church—to be a house of prayer, to be a house of healing, to be a house of reconciliation for all people.

Don’t react to the temperature of culture.

Set the thermostat! How? With an extra measure of grace for everyone created in God’s image!

After hearing about the tragic killing of Ahmaud Arbery, I picked up a book by Eric Mason titled *Woke Church*. The foreword is written by John Perkins who grew up in the Jim Crow era with separate theaters, separate waiting rooms, separate rest rooms. His brother was killed by the police. This paragraph is impacting me profoundly...

It wasn’t until I was badly beaten in a Brandon jail that I saw the absolute necessity for reconciliation. It was there that I saw the depths of racism. I wanted nothing to do with white people after that. But while I recovered in the hospital, white doctors and nurses cared for me, washing my wounds and loving me. We were healing each other. That’s when I prayed, “Lord, I want to preach a gospel that can reconcile, that brings blacks and whites together in one body.”

I find myself praying that prayer over and over: “Lord, I want to preach a gospel that can reconcile, that brings blacks and whites together in one body.”

I can't answer every question. I can't solve every problem. I'm reminded of what Jehoshaphat prayed in the middle of national crisis: "We don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you." Why do we look to God? Because reconciliation starts with right relationship with the God in whose image we are created, all of us!

We don't always know what to do, but we won't remain silent. We won't remain dormant. There is a sin of silence. May the gospel of reconciliation break the yoke of racism, in Jesus name. Why? Because the church ought to be the most reconciled place on the planet. To that end we lament. To that end we repent. To that end we pray. To that end we worship. To that end we wash each other's feet.

"We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today," said Dr. King. "We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life there is such a thing as being too late." Inaction is an action and indecision is a decision. Delayed obedience is disobedience. Don't let what you cannot do keep you from doing what you can. Look for opportunities to be light, to be love, to be a minister of reconciliation to those who don't look like you, think like you, and vote like you. Why? That's the Great Commandment. Love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no greater opportunity than the present.

Let's step up, step in, and be the reconciled body of Christ.