

Sermon
2nd Sunday after Pentecost—Proper 6-A
June 14, 2020
William Bradbury

Exodus 19:2-8a
Psalm 100
Romans 5:1-8
Matthew 9:35-10:8(9-23)

Well, here we are! You're looking at the screen and wondering "who is this guy and what's he doing in my church!"

I'm looking out and wondering, "Who are these people I've never met watching at home?"

We are strangers to each other—and yet in this moment we are all grieving together: you're grieving the loss of Reverend Joe, who for so many years faithfully and well served among you. He told me how touched he was by your great send off last week.

I'm still grieving not being able to be with All Saints', Chelmsford where I retired at the end of January after almost 8 years as rector.

And, of course, we are all grieving the unemployment, and the sickness and death of this pandemic. And we wonder "Will it ever end? Who else is going to die? Will life ever get back to normal?"

But if those two things weren't enough—and they certainly are more than enough—in these last several weeks we as a nation have had to face America's original sin. We all saw, **and cannot unsee**, the 8 minutes and 46 seconds murder of a child of God named George Floyd. And in that seeing, we saw the system of domination known as "White Supremacy" that has been running our country for 401 years. White folks, like me, growing up in Atlanta, have benefited by this system, while people of color have had to endure slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation, and systemic racism in housing, education, employment, and the justice system. But on that street in Minneapolis the curtain was pulled back and we saw, not a kindly wizard pulling levers, but a system that destroys the souls of human beings.

And as our nation grieves, so too every church worthy of the name of "Christian" also grieves, for it is an incontrovertible fact that these centuries of suffering could NOT have happened without the support of White Christians, which supported the passing of the laws that kept the system in place.

I remember back in the '70s hearing a hero of mine, Carlyle Marney, once the pastor of prestigious Myers Park Southern Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC say he stopped asking God to fix the race problem since it could be fixed overnight if only all the Baptist deacons running every city council in the south voted to end it.

The white Church kept the status quo and told People of Color to follow these Laws, keep their place, and pick themselves up.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was right when he said that it is the height of hypocrisy to tell people without shoes to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

I imagine you and I have been fighting to wash away this stain on our national soul our whole lives, yet it turns out we haven't done enough and the evil is too entrenched, too powerful, so we've been grieving and crying out, "O God, save us!"

 Fortunately, as so often happens, today's gospel reading brings God's Word to our rescue. Jesus comes to us today "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom".

Throughout his ministry Jesus **preaches** the kingdom, the Commonwealth, of God, through sermons and parables and Jesus **performs** the arrival of the kingdom, that is, makes it visible, through healings and sharing meals with all sorts and conditions of human beings, in order to **create one new humanity**.

A moment ago, you and I prayed "Our Father, who art in heaven...**thy kingdom come...on earth.**"

The good news of the kingdom is NOT about going to heaven when we die, though we do live eternally in Christ! The kingdom is the New Creation that breaks into our lives through Jesus, crucified and Risen.

In Ephesians Paul is explicit about what Jesus does for us, when he writes, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood, that is the life energy, of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh **he has made both groups—Jew and Gentile—into one** and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us...that he might **create in himself one new humanity** in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it."

There it is: "**create in himself one new humanity.**"

That's why in Galatians Paul can make the astounding claim:

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Please know that creating the One New Humanity is not a Democrat issue or a Republican issue, it is a Biblical issue, running straight through Genesis to Revelation. It is at the heart of why "when we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

But talk is cheap, so Jesus gives his followers power and authority to not only proclaim the kingdom but also to make it visible. Now, it's on us,

trusting the Spirit, to make visible **the one new humanity**, the Beloved Community.

It's the song we learned as children: "Red and Yellow, Black and White, they are all precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world."

I realize you who are St. Andrew's Church know this, because you are making visible the Kingdom in your partnership with St. John's Church in Tanzania to bring clean water to people who do not look or sound anything like you.

You are making visible the Kingdom in your partnership with MANA and through many other outreach ministries. You make visible the love of Christ in how you love one another and your neighbor, which is why we wear our masks.

In this time of massive and on-going grief, suffering, and national brokenness, we may be tempted to lose heart. But we must not, for as our Presiding Bishop says: **"We are an Easter People living in a Good Friday world." Which means our nation needs us to know the love of Christ and to make it known.**

So, for every morning and evening I commend to you this familiar prayer from the Eastern Orthodox liturgy: "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love."

I look forward to being your Bridge Priest and getting to know you—first virtually, and in God's time, face to face.

And most of all, I look forward to assisting you in any way I can in **proclaiming AND performing** the Kingdom of justice and compassion to all the one people of God.