



Chaos and Fear Voices and Choices

Luke 10:25-37

Chaos and Fear

The last few months have been difficult for us as a nation. We have sought to respond to an unparalleled virulent virus which resulted in a global pandemic, a national state of emergency, millions unemployed, businesses and schools closed, and 100,000 lives lost to COVID-19. The fear and uncertainty was, at times, palpable.

Over the last few weeks, some restrictions were lifted. Restaurants, shops, and stores were opened, albeit with limitations. Major employers returned to work, and cautious, careful steps were made to return to a measure of normality. Amidst the fears and uncertainties, there were signs of hope.

On the 25th of May, however, the brutal and senseless death of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis sparked protests across multiple cities. This was so soon after the homicide of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia while he was jogging. Amidst deep and heartfelt cries for justice for George Floyd and his family, the old infected wounds of racial injustice have opened and become inflamed once again.

Sadly, a number of the legitimate and peaceful protests have been hijacked by those who wish to engage in violence, rioting, and looting.

In yet another brutal and senseless death, David Dorn, 77, was shot and killed while attempting to protect someone else's property and business from looters. His death was shown on Facebook. David was a retired African-American police officer who had been recalled to duty, having served his community for 38 years.

As a nation, we welcome and encourage peaceful protests and the opportunity to speak out against injustice. Our nation was born speaking out against injustices. Such principles are enshrined in our foundational documents:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Voices and Choices

How then does a nation begin to bind up the open wounds of grief and mourning, fear and frustration, hatred and violence in an atmosphere where life has been treated with indifference, contempt, and disdain?

In the Gospel of Luke (10:25-37), Jesus tells the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan. A man traveling on the bleak, desolate desert road from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked, robbed, badly beaten, and left "half dead." Jesus tells his listeners that a priest saw the man and passed by on the other side. A Levite did the same.

Then a Samaritan stopped and helped the man by treating his wounds, lifting him onto his own donkey, and taking him to an inn, where he paid for the injured man's care and lodging and promised to pay more if required. Samaritans and Jews were considered enemies; historically they despised each other. Jesus completes the parable by highlighting the personal care and concern shown by the Samaritan and challenged his listeners to "Go and do likewise."

Scripture teaches that throughout history we have consistently underestimated the power, significance, and gravitas of unrestrained sin. Sin has recently manifested itself in our cities and main streets. It has sought to hide in the shadows disguised as chaos and violence. It has maliciously encouraged loathing and hostility, injustice and racial attacks, looting and arson, fear and the destruction of life.

Yet the Scriptures also teach that we consistently underestimate the power, significance, and gravitas of the love of God. Such love transforms lives, refreshes and renews the soul, and births trust and intimacy, peace and contentment in a relationship with Christ. It powerfully demonstrates to individuals and societies that life is sacred and should never be

treated with contempt or disdain. "Go and do likewise."

As a nation, we now have a voice and a choice. It is easy to give voice to suspicion, blame someone else, and point our fingers in their direction. Yet suspicion and distrust are not the values we hold to be self-evident. Such a voice does not reflect or define who we are.

We can choose to submit and surrender to fear and violence, injustice and hate, or we can stand for the core values that define us as a nation. Those core values have also been on display recently. There have been moments when protesters and police have walked together, knelt together, prayed together, and sung "Amazing Grace" together. Both protesters and police officers have intentionally intervened amidst the violence and the chaos, seeking to assist those who were injured and frightened for their lives. Those are the values that define who we are—values embedded within our national character. "Go and do likewise."

Choices now lie before us. Lives will be rebuilt, wounds will heal, souls will be renewed, and individuals and families will learn to love again, because at the core of who we are lies the love and grace of God. His call upon us, in this generation, in these United States, is to act as He has acted towards us. Having been the recipients of His transforming love and grace, there is no place for racial injustice in the Christian life. We are now called to "Go and do likewise."

"Go and do likewise" to all people—people of a different race, people of a different background, people who don't think as you do. Perhaps when His love and grace are extended and seen and felt, then the protection of innocent lives and the words of "Amazing Grace" will become a living reality for each of us. "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see."

Dr. Gibbons messages are available online at FirstPresGreenville.org (Media tab) and on Fox Carolina, Sundays at 10:30am.