

Prelude

Greeting

Hello everyone! This is Pastor Melinda and Tancrede from Shiloh UCC. I hope that you are doing well and staying healthy.

Message

Usually, I am not a controversial figure. I tend to shy away from politics. I escaped communism, so my focus after that struggle has been to help people here in America. But now America is struggling.

With the homicide of George Floyd by the police, protests across the World are scaring everyone. Don't get me wrong. I am a supporter of the police. I pray for them nearly every Sunday. Being a police officer is a tough and dangerous job, which requires logic, restraint, and discipline. Not everyone has the ability to perform under pressure like that.

Despite this, most officers I know are hard-working, good people who check their emotions under pressure. And it's also true that police officers join the force because they want to make a difference. They want to serve and protect. Anyone who saw the videos of Sheriff Chris Swanson of Flint Michigan knows there are good police who care.¹ Chris Swanson laid down his riot gear and kneeled with protesters. He said "I want to make this protest into a parade".

Most officers get satisfaction from a hard job by doing good. Ministers become ministers for the same reason. We want to help. We want to do good. We need good police officers because without them we have anarchy. Having said that, cold blooded murder is cold blooded murder, no matter who does it.

Being a parent this murder affected me. The video is graphic and does not leave much room for interpretation. George Floyd leaves behind a wife and a 6 year old. Who will raise George Floyd's daughter now? Who will watch her graduate? Who will be there to give her away when she gets married?

With the birth of my daughter, I cannot imagine what would happen to Sophie if Tank was murdered. We need to change the way we treat our neighbors. Power must be tempered by checks and balances. There has to be

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd0rDV8oD9Y>

accountability for this kind of behavior. I disagree with St. Augustine's Doctrine of Just War. Can murder on a grand scale be justified?

I have to point out the obvious: killing another human being is a sin. It is a sin; and there needs to be an accounting for this injustice. Only God can give and take lives. God inspires us to have restraint in the face of strong emotions. God teaches us to act with prudent, yet bold courage. So what is a prudent response to this crisis?

It is not courageous to loot and pillage. It is not brave to steal, and vandalize. It is not helpful to set police cars on fire. These are also sins. Therefore, our response must be non-violent but unwavering. We must be steadfast in our determination to promote justice. Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., promoted non-violent civil disobedience. Without war, they changed the world.

It is an ideal first written about by Henry David Thoreau.² He was a white man who lived on the frontier and didn't want to pay taxes to a government that couldn't defend him or offer any services. Like Martin Luther King Jr. who wrote "A Letter from Birmingham Jail", Thoreau wrote "On Civil Disobedience" in jail as well.

When the famous Essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson saw him incarcerated he said, "What are you doing in there?" Thoreau's response was: "What are you, doing out there?" The implication being that a citizen has a moral obligation to disobey laws which are unjust.

If we want to make a difference we have to be smart. We have to follow these non violent examples in history that actually worked. Gandhi liberated a whole country from English domination, and he did it non violently. Sin cannot be eradicated by more sin. We need to love our neighbor, and yes, in some situations we must even turn the other cheek.

Violence just breeds more violence. We need to be smarter than that. We need real change. Gandhi said: "An eye for an eye makes everybody blind."³

During the American Revolution, Thomas Paine wrote and I quote: "These are the times that try men's souls; the summer soldier and the

2 <https://www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/thoreau-and-civil-disobedience>

3 https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/mahatma_gandhi_107039

sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."⁴

These times test our souls. We need God more than ever now. We need to read Psalms which remind us that even though it looks scary, God is in control. God is working to bring about holy transformation through our prudent stance against all forms of violence. We must make a stand. We must read our Bibles and stand with God and our neighbors.

Who is our neighbor? Everybody...black, white, brown, or yellow, we are all in this thing together. We are one in the Body of Christ. And now let us praise our God with the words of Psalm 8.

Psalm 8

1 O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.

2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
4 what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

5 Yet you have made them a little lower than the angels,
and crowned them with glory and honor.

6 You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

4 <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/thomas-paine-publishes-american-crisis>

8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
 whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
 9 O Lord, our Sovereign,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 8 praises God for all the amazing things in our universe and also for creating humans. Verse 2 says “Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark...” Children recognize God’s greatness and love when we teach them well. Sophia sings hymns and says prayers every day. It’s so sweet to watch her sing the Doxology or “Gloria Patri”. It’s just so special to hear a little child praise God.

To God, we are all little children. When we pray and sing hymns to God, we are in step with Divine Intention. No matter how scary the news gets, God’s love for us is unchanging. God loves all of us.

As we walk through the days and nights of this desert experience, God is walking with us, hand in hand, without social distancing. God is not only walking with us hand in hand, but God lives in our hearts, our inner being, encouraging us to look up at the sky and see how amazing our universe is.

When we look up at the stars, moon, and sun, when we meditate on their beauty, how can we think of murder? When we see innocent children affected by all this social distancing, and violence, how can we forget about God? How can we forget about love?

Now let us listen to Psalm 8 in a different way. Let’s listen to Silvia Purdie’s simple paraphrase of Psalm 8, written for all to understand.

God, our living God,

you are amazing!

You are higher than I can look,

You are wider than I can see.

But I can hear you –

Listen!

We can hear you in the laughter of a little child,

We can hear you in the babbling of a baby.

You don't need words to tell us of your power.

Why do you need us at all?

*We are so small, and the world is so big,
the stars are so many and space is so enormous.*

*God, our living God,
you are amazing!*

You made everything.

Why do I matter?

But we do matter!

*God cares for us most of all,
and through us God cares for all the world.*

*You put everything into our care,
all the animals, all the birds, all the fish,
everything that creeps or flies or runs or swims,
even the land and the air and the sea.*

It is all ours to look after.

*God, our living God,
you are amazing!*

Today, no matter what we are going through, no matter how scary our world gets, let us praise our amazing God, who loves us and cares for us every day. Let us praise the amazing God that saves and heals us. Amen.

Hymn # 553 "There Is a Balm in Gilead"

Blessing

Thank you for watching! Tomorrow, Thursday morning between 10:00 and 11:00 AM, if you are in the area, come and say "Hello" to me at Shiloh UCC. I will be at the front entrance. You can drive by and wave, if you wish.