

## ***A message for parents in these troubled times...***

George Floyd was a son and brother who was loved by his family and friends. His tragic and unjust death is an affront to our common humanity. It is a poignant and visceral reminder of the brutality of systemic racism and injustice that has perpetuated cultural, economic, and civil inequality between races for over 400 years of American history. His killing and the violent responses we are watching today and tonight continue to fan the flames of fear, mistrust, and violence.

It would be disingenuous for any parent, regardless of race, to claim that they do not fear for the safety of their own children in these troubled times as such senseless and all too common killings continue, as we battle the public health crisis of COVID-19, and as we watch with horror the news of riots and looting, shootings, and communities literally on fire all across our country.

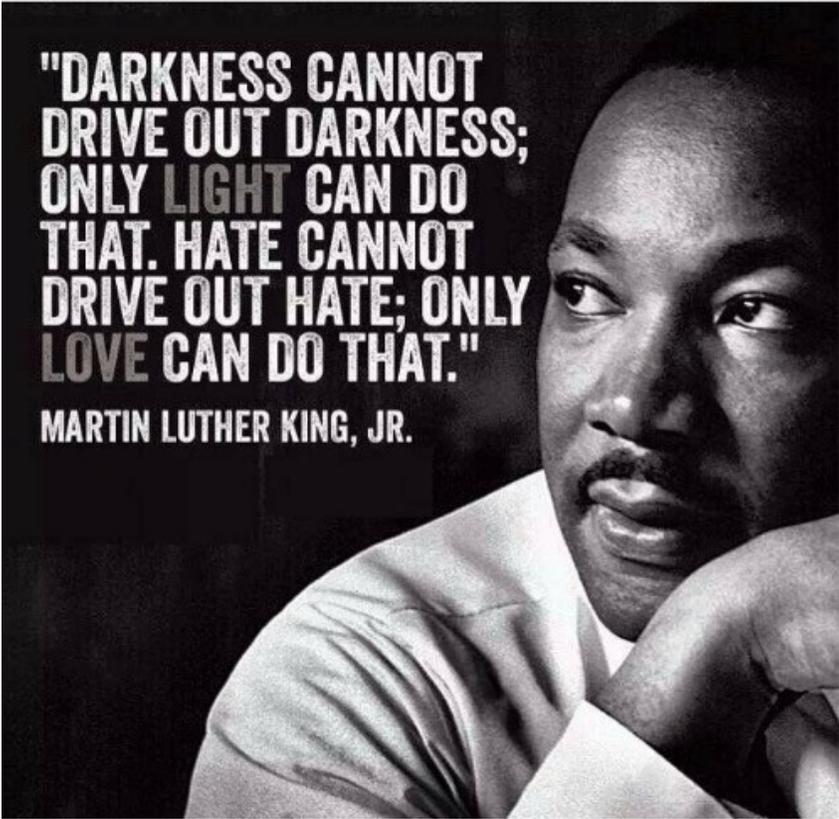
In his 1933 inaugural address, Franklin Delano Roosevelt famously said: "The only thing we have to fear is...fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance." Again, in his State of the Union Address delivered to the 77th United States Congress on January 6, 1941, he spoke of four essential freedoms that people "everywhere in the world" ought to enjoy: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. This inspired Norman Rockwell to paint parents tucking their children into bed as an illustration of freedom from fear and it continues to inspire as the accompanying modern adaptation demonstrates.

So, what can parents do for their children in such a time as this? Love them. Pray for them and with them. Hold them close to be sure. But also teach them. Teach them what?

Teach them the most revolutionary, countercultural truth humanity has ever wrestled with. Teach them the way of Christ - the way of love. Teach them that "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear." (1 John 4:18)



***(continued on next page)***



**"DARKNESS CANNOT  
DRIVE OUT DARKNESS;  
ONLY LIGHT CAN DO  
THAT. HATE CANNOT  
DRIVE OUT HATE; ONLY  
LOVE CAN DO THAT."**

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

*What does this love look like and how does it express itself in a context like the one in which we are living?*

In Matthew 5 as part of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also...You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous."

The trajectory of violence and retribution is always more of the same - an unending cycle of

pain. But Jesus introduces something radically different - sacrificial love, mercy, and grace. What is the trajectory of this approach? The cessation of violence, the end of a cycle of retribution - space for reconciliation, restoration, healing, and peace. Whereas, the wisdom of the world would have us "amp up," the wisdom of God expressed through Jesus "amps down."

The Catholic Bishop of Geneva in the early 1600s, St. Frances de Sales, famously expressed this ethic of Jesus when he said: "There is nothing so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength."

Whatever your perspective, we don't need to chase after the strength that further militarizes and arms police officers to protect and serve our communities, nor do we need to chase a strength that emboldens protesters to greater and greater acts of violence and unrest to fight injustice. Instead, we need law enforcement officials, protestors, and advocates for positive change who demonstrate the great strength of restraint, the way of love. I believe that Abraham Lincoln knew this truth when he said: "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

These are dark and fearful days and times that call not for our base instincts in response to fear, but for "the better angels of our nature." The answer - the only answer - to the pain we feel and see all around us remains love. While this may seem naive or weak, to dismiss and deny this fundamental truth is simply to perpetuate more of the same pain, loss, and trauma in a cycle that never ends. Most of us will be powerless to impact what happens in the streets of our nation tonight, but we have immeasurable power to shape the hearts and minds of the next generation living in our own homes.

So... tonight and tomorrow, and in all the days that follow make it your life's mission to hold your children close; to tell them you love them; to pray for them and with them; and to teach them that the greatest strength of all is the capacity to love all our neighbors without limit and in so doing give them true freedom from fear.

In Christ,  
Pastor Brian King

## ***This is George Floyd.***

As Brenna Ziemet (a stranger to me) observed: "He was a man and he was loved...He was a human being and with his last breath he cried for the woman who raised him. I'm so sorry all you mom's out there that go to sleep fearing for the lives of your black sons. I'm so sorry for how much this hurts to watch happen again and to know it won't be the last. I'm sorry for your weariness and your fear and the very real threat you live with every day. I'm so sorry!"

Once again, there are no human words sufficient... This was wrong. This was evil. I look for the fulfillment of the prophet Amos' words (Amos 5:24) to "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Specifically, I pray and will advocate that the men responsible for his death will be brought to justice; that reforms in procedures and training will be swift so that similar such egregious incidents will be prevented; and that people of all races, ethnicities, and religions will endeavor to seek peace, promote understanding, and act to heal rather than fan further flames of unrest, mistrust, and violence. I pray for the safety and well-being of men and women of color, and the poor, and those who are often victims of such senseless brutality, violence, and injustice. I pray for good and honest police officers and others in law enforcement who faithfully serve and protect their communities day in and day out and who are not a part of this problem and had nothing to do with this particular incident.

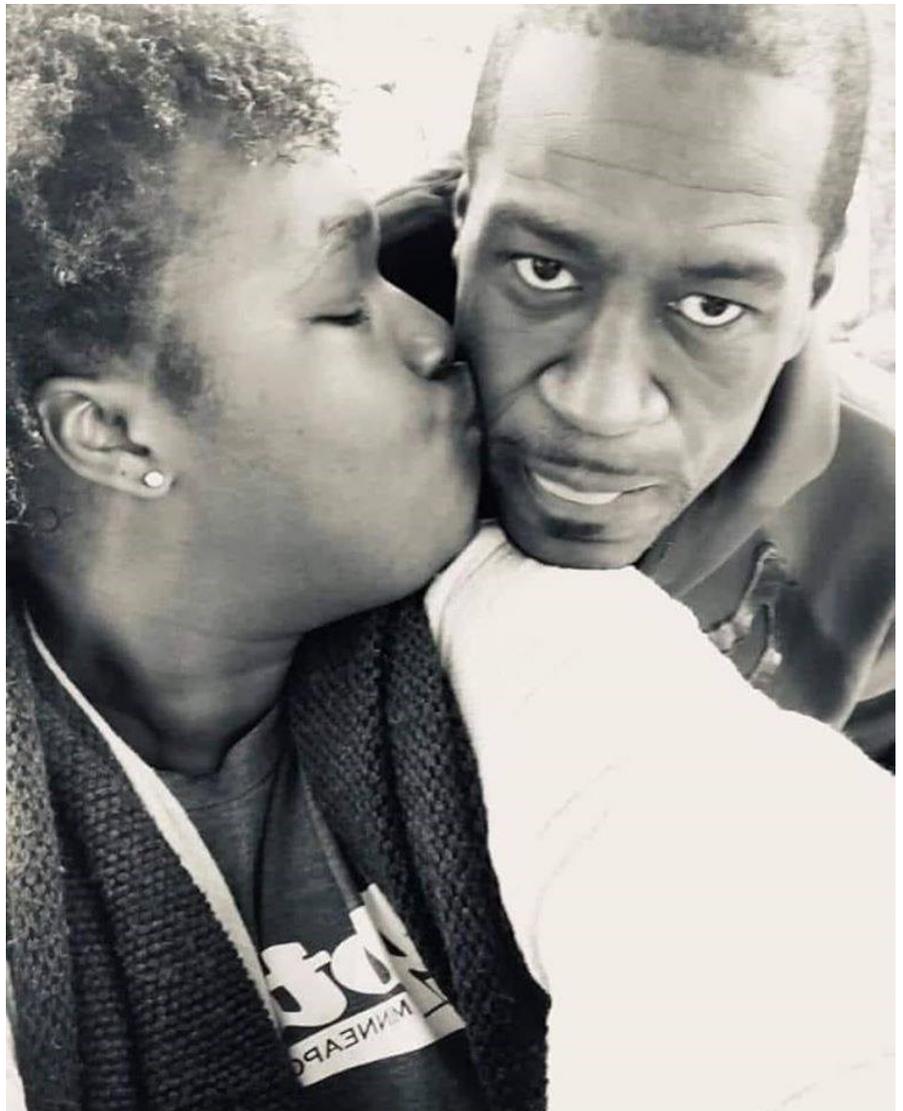
In Ephesians 4, St. Paul writes, "So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil."

I am angry and most likely you are too. May our words and actions in the days ahead and always be those that promote light, not darkness; love, not hatred; hope, not fear; unity, not division; life, not death.

In Christ,  
Pastor Brian King

---

*My prayer for ALL PEOPLE is Ephesians 4:25-32 - "So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."*



## ***THE PRESIDENT, GOVERNOR, MAYOR, OR JESUS?***

Jesus was once asked: Which law/commandment is the greatest? To which he responded: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourself." Arguably, Jesus indicated that the best exercise of our Christian freedom is to submit to the law of love. And while Christians are called to honor those who are in positions of civil authority, our highest authority is always Jesus.

So, Jesus is our highest authority and He says that love is the greatest law...

What specifically then does scripture say about the nature of love? Well, according to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, "Love is patient and kind, it is not envious, boastful, arrogant or rude; it does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth; it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things; it never dies."

In the midst of this pandemic, it matters what our President, Governor, and Mayor say, and it matters how our freedom and rights are protected or infringed. Yet, for every follower of Jesus Christ, it would seem that the law of love as described above is our best and primary guide for determining whether we will honor or violate a law or governmental proclamation, for instance, whether we will wash our hands, keep physical distance from others, choose to gather in a crowd, or wear a facemask in a public place.

As a follower of Jesus, I keep asking myself how am I doing honoring the law of love toward my neighbors? Is my speech and action patient and kind toward others, or is it arrogant or rude? In the midst of this pandemic does my speech and action come across as irritable, resentful, and insisting upon my own way, or do I demonstrate the heart of one who believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things out of love for others?

We do live in a free country and we do enjoy all the blessings and liberties promised within the Bill of Rights. How then shall we use those freedoms most responsibly for ourselves and others?

Perhaps the clear and most compelling answer to that question is best framed through the greatest of all laws, which supersedes even the Bill of Rights, and that, at least for followers of Jesus, is the law of love.

In Christ,

Pastor Brian King

