

2 Corinthians 13:11–13

11 Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Holy, Holy, Holy One, guide us by the Spirit of truth to hear the Word of life you speak, and to give all glory, honor, and praise to your threefold name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It is Trinity Sunday. This year's readings are all very short, and honestly none of them talk about the mystery of the Trinity. In fact, to make the first reading applicable the folks who created the lectionary had to take out verse three; because their intent was to cast Jesus as the light, like the gospel of John claims Jesus is the light of the world. They have to take out verse three though because it says that God created the light, and if God created Jesus then Jesus isn't also God, he is a creature, and if he's created and not God then we should not be worshipping him. I understand what they are trying to do, but as I've mentioned before, if you have to take scripture out of its context to make your point, you are not reading the Bible correctly.

If you look at our other two readings, the only reason they were chosen is that they include a trinitarian blessing, much like the benediction I give at the end of the service. This is all for the best I suppose. Very few people really want to hear a sermon on the Trinity, because even pastors don't have an answer to how three can be one, yet individual at the same time. It's a mystery, and inquiring minds will still need to inquire.

I did find something else to preach about. In fact, I find our second reading very applicable to our lives today. The book of Second Corinthians is a compilation of several letters that Paul wrote to that congregation. And much like our society is today, they were at each other's throats, maybe not literally like some of us are, but they certainly were not in agreement, and it was tearing them apart. Paul has a message for them and a message for us today.

Paul says, "Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." I don't know how much of the news you've been watching, but we are not doing much of that, and it's getting worse. Maybe it needs to get worse before it gets better. Let's break these statements down a bit.

Paul says put things in order. What kind of order did we have that led to the killing of George Floyd? Maybe we need to take a closer look at that order and decide if we want to continue with it? Do we want an order that favors some people over others? Is that the order that Christ wants us to have?

The order we have been living under is the type of order that systemically hurts people of color. Schools in minority neighborhoods are underfunded compared to schools in other areas. Minorities are consistently denied business loans over white people, even though the only difference is the color of their skin.

Minorities are consistently sentenced to harsher jail terms than white people. Which is worse, getting caught selling drugs, or raping someone? I think most of us would say raping someone, yet Brock Turner got a six-month sentence and only served three months of it. If you are charged with selling class 1 drugs in Minnesota it is a fifth-degree drug charge, a felony offense. If convicted, you could face up to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000. Since the 1970's drug charges have been a way to lock up minorities, and many of them will get a

higher sentence compared to a white person doing the exact same thing. Our prisons, both private and government run are filled with minorities with long term minor drug offences.

And this doesn't even address the fact that white rich people are able to embezzle, commit fraud, and outright steal from people through various quasi-legal means and if they are caught they get a slap on the wrist or saved by their rich influential friends.

Our police have been slowly militarized and tend to react much differently to predominately white protests compared to minority protests. Think back a few weeks ago when armed white men showed up to the state capitol building in Michigan and other places. They literally yelled and spit into the faces of officers, who stood there and did nothing, yet this week there are hundreds of stories of police attacking peaceful protesters and even journalists, in the Twin Cities and in other places as well. Is this the order that we want to maintain?

Trevor Noah, the star of The Daily Show, made a post this week about what is going on. He talks about the escalation of things in regard to the idea of a social contract. In the U.S. just like any other country, there is an implied social contract. We aren't supposed to steal from each other, we are supposed to be non-violent etc. There are caveats to that contract. It is set up to favor some people over others. Amy Cooper is a white woman who was in Central Park in New York City with her unleashed dog, a leash is required. When a black man asked her to leash her dog, she responded by telling him she would call the police and tell them that he had threatened her life. Think about that. She knew that by calling the police she as a white woman would be able to cause trouble for the black man, even if he wasn't doing anything wrong, and she was. She knew how the police would react.

The social contract works great for us, yet not so well for minorities. At some point after being mistreated under the contract minorities start to realize that maybe they don't need to abide by the social contract, after all, it's not benefiting them. That is when looting and rioting start. When there is no benefit to participating in the social contract. And it's almost impossible for minorities to make changes to the contract. Politicians tend not to listen to poorer minorities. If they try to peacefully protest, they are told they are in the way, and should do it somewhere that doesn't inconvenience others. Guess what, they are inconvenienced, that is why they are protesting. If we feel inconvenienced by a protest that just gives us a glimpse of what they are going through every single day! Is this the order that we want to continue under?

At the same time Paul talks about living in peace. Peace sounds good, it sounds like something to strive for, the question I have is what does it take to maintain that peace? If it means decimating our minority population, if it means stomping hard on the necks of people who just want the same opportunities that we all want, then maybe that is not the peace we should be striving for.

We need to do better. We need to work towards God's peace. God's peace includes people from every race and nation. God's peace includes love for our neighbors, whomever they may be. So, the question becomes; how do we do this? In this month's newsletter I mentioned some suggestions. It's not easy, partially because we live in a mostly white community, but there are still some things we can do. I want to highlight some of them again.

First and foremost, we all, including myself, need to recognize that the system is currently rigged, and honestly, it is rigged in our favor. That doesn't mean that we have had everything handed to us, it means that nobody is actively putting barriers up in front of us.

Another thing that we must do is listen to the people that are being oppressed. One of the worst things we can do is assume we know what minorities are feeling. I will never know what it's like to be black, or Native American, or Hispanic, or Asian, or anything except being white. I

may have had a similar experience as they've had once or twice, but I've never had to live it 24 hours a day all my life. We need to be open enough to be quiet and leave some space for what our brothers and sisters want to tell us. This isn't about asking them to educate us, many of them are tired of trying to do that, and it isn't their job, if you want to be educated read a book, if you want to try to understand someone's personal story listen.

Another thing we can do is demand accountability from police and other officials that are attacking minorities. As I'm writing this sermon I've noticed a push by some people on Facebook to say that we need to focus on the good cops, not all police are bad, and they are right, not all police are bad, but if we start shifting the focus from, police violence needs to be addressed and systemic change needs to happen, to saying that it's a few bad apples, then nothing will get done, and the system will continue rolling over people.

Finally, we need to vote for the common good, not just for our own benefit. This is not me saying you need to vote for one person or party over another, this is me saying that for true systemic change to happen we need to vote for representatives that are willing to work across the aisle for the common good of all Americans.

God's peace may not come until Christ himself comes back to lead us into the Kingdom, but that doesn't mean that we should just sit on our hands and wait. Let's work to bring something closer to the Kingdom of God here on earth now. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen