

## BELIEVE LIFE MATTERS

We're navigating some unknown waters here lately. Just when we were leaving our 'dens' to resume the new version of normal life (after Covid-19 isolations), along comes a social upheaval like we have not seen since the late 1960's. As a white male I will share my thoughts on an issue that is long overdue and most likely the first of several to be addressed (I do not mean to exclude women in these thoughts but their movement is on-going and does not provoke the activity of **Black Lives Matter** (BLM). Justice and equality for indigenous people and the immigrant communities will, I feel, be addressed next. As painful, and scary, as these topics are, I see them as positive steps on the road to humanity valuing and protecting the human rights of all people. Perhaps this awakening will shine a light on the dire plight of the unborn who have been persecuted like no other group.

Like everyone, I watched in true horror as life was forced from George Floyd. A horror, I should add, like I have never seen. Thinking of Mr. Floyd's family watching that video has brought me to a profound sadness I am still struggling to understand. It's the essence of what every family knows to be their worst nightmare possible. George Floyd had bouts with the law and personal addictions. Some people drink too much, are selfish, cruel with their words, unkind, untruthful, and worse. He seems, from all accounts, to be a guy just searching for his way in the world but a loving and gentle man. He just struggled. You can say that these struggles put him in harm's way. Struggles do that. We are vulnerable when we struggle, financially-emotionally-spiritually, and can encounter dangerous possibilities when we do. George Floyd's struggles put him on a converging path with a police officer who obviously had many struggles of his own, cruelty and a lack of compassion are the most obvious. This was the worst possible scenario for both. Both of them are sons, (I think fathers), and both of their lives are over. Was it because Mr. Floyd was black and the officer white? We have no way to tell, no one does, but somehow the issue of racism hijacked the conversation and did so quickly. I'm sure long before anyone actually knew the answer to that question. To be fair, way more whites are the victim of police violence. Rightfully, police tactics and training have been called into question, as they should, but this a quantum leap from assuming this incident was about race. Some feel the point is too many people quick to break the law. And, not to say that race hasn't been a long-standing problem for centuries just feeds into the frustration and anger surrounding the times we are experiencing right now. Too many (un-countable) incidents have come and gone for decades involving law-enforcement and young black men (mostly). Each time outrage was expressed and suppressed quickly, with no political or societal action taken. We should protest police brutality on any group of people with equal fervor. Prior protests have eventually faded into everyday life, while the families were left with a hole of sadness bored forever into their hearts and souls. How long does it take to understand the problems and solutions needed? Despite decades of unproductive political responses, the past several weeks has seen our leaders finally try to legislate a way out of the systemic illnesses that have plagued our country for way too long. Disingenuous? Election years tend to be just that. The real question, though, is can they remedy the illness they want to address with more laws? Will young black men, and others of color, ever feel safe to gather outdoors, jogging or socializing, and working, without the fear of being profiled. Or, if encountered by law enforcement, will they feel as if they too have protection under the laws of this country...even if they are breaking some laws. This should also be an important time to exercise some control by our communities to show their commitment to

change. When we break the law, especially serious crimes, we place ourselves in circumstances that, for the most part, don't occur when we obey the law. Both the criminal element in our world, and going to jail, increase the risk of harm exponentially. In these environments, we are taking our chances and putting ourselves at risk, even if our crimes do not warrant certain potential outcomes. Especially if you are a person of color. Crime does not solve crime.

So... how do we help enact change? How do we make sure this country becomes safe for everyone to roam? How does true justice exist for all people? I know we have to begin by seeing everyone as brothers or sisters (family), and seeing to their well-being as we would our own. The starting line should be before GOD in a position of humility. We can make a comparison to the change required for real spiritual conversion, or in Greek, Metanoia. For any of us to authentically become disciples of Jesus Christ, a real conversion of our hearts is necessary. We must do more than simply claim the title of Christian. Our modern world seems to want the benefits of Jesus' life without acknowledging HIS life gave us these values in the first place. Real change must begin in the heart at the table of loving kindness. We may want to deny the existence of universal or inalienable values, but moral or natural law clearly has consequences when we drift from its influence and we're living those consequences (and have been for a while). It isn't GOD's doing (consequences), it's ours, and before you blame Christianity or religion in general, understand that this world has never given peace a chance. It is always at war with something. It is always exploiting or persecuting some population. In some parts of the world it is political corruption. In others it is the dignity of human life under attack. Whatever it is, humanity will never solve the issues of race, greed, corruption, or hatred without a real commitment to **Love**. This is true of every institution (including churches), government, and every group in existence. For too long, hatred, bias, and fear have been woven into our consciousness to the point where we stand by in silence while injustice flourishes around us. The hunger for justice will always boil to the surface. One of my favorite songs ("They Call It Democracy") says "One day you will arise from your habitual feast and find yourself staring down the throat of the beast they call the revolution". Look it up, history has borne this out since the beginning. Here, I am speaking of ALL injustice...racial, economic, social, everything. This is what is referred to (in this country), accurately or not, as white privilege. You may not care for this term but it speaks to a majority of our population that has the power to facilitate change and is reluctant or reticent to do so. Through my silence, I am as guilty as anyone. The truth of this is also revealed in the distance we have put between ourselves and being the voice for morality. I said this a couple weeks ago... we need to "Express our Faith like a people expressing their Faith". Eventually, we have to move from practicing our Faith and get down to living it, as if we are "Loving the Lord our GOD with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength...and our neighbor as ourselves." Whether we belong to or believe in any Christian or other religion, the values expressed in the "Way, the Truth, and Life" of Jesus Christ would produce an infinitely better world to live in. Even if it only represents a set of personal precepts to live by. For too long, Christianity has allowed poor behavior to represent its values and it has turned people off. Churches have a role as teachers and protectors of that **Faith**, but they also form community and provide stability and safety for society. We are losing this rapidly and the world desperately needs it. The poor and persecuted in our midst depend on it. When we decided that guilt was a 'bad' thing, we threw out our conscience too, just to be safe. Now, to be really clear here, I am speaking of any and all discrimination involving humanity, regardless of race, regardless of economic status, anything that sets some apart from a predominant population. Before you are offended by what I am saying, remember that our Lord and Savior tells us that "if we think something, it is the same as doing it" (Matt. 5:27). Or when we speak ill of

another, without physical violence, we have still committed murder (of the soul). This may be a high standard, but that is only because we have allowed ourselves, in our hearts and minds, to rationalize the gap between **HIS** Word and our actions. Otherwise, living the **Way**, the **Truth**, and the **Life** would be easy. We exert "white privilege" when we allow others to be exploited for our gain. A passive exploitation. We're addicts who desire the "fix" of cheap products made by the poor who are paid as little as a "latte and bagel" for a day's work. By we, I should say, I am referring to Christians. Non-Christians have no such boundaries, which is certainly a large part of the problem. We are living the life of a secular society.

**Black Lives do matter.** Injustice and cruelty are wrong and IMMORAL on every level and for every one. If you are a Christian, this issue must concern you. To deny this responsibility is to deny **Christ**. It is our moral imperative to speak up for, and to demand, justice for all of humanity. If we do not, then we cannot profess our Creed with any integrity or honesty. We have to see past the destruction and looting that is taking place. These are issues to address separately. In front of us, in full focus, is the matter of allowing our brothers and sisters to be mistreated and persecuted because of our differences. We must solve this issue before we move on to the issue of those who destroy and divide. This is the way of evil. We must not allow societal "attention deficit" to distract us from what we can acknowledge and accomplish right now. Is this scary? You bet. Just as things have been scary for others a long time. The goal should be to never refer to specific groups, or any race as anything other than human beings. We should endeavor to see all people as equal creations of a GOD who is LOVE. We should view this time as exciting steps on the road to bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. The violence and the destruction by fringe groups, is their "sin" to address. We should not judge their actions when we have "sins" of our own to work on. The conversion of our hearts, our devotion to humility, is the **Way** we serve our **Good** and **Loving GOD**.

**See You Soon!!!**

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