

Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ – Los Angeles
Eighth Sunday of Pentecost/Ordinary Time – July 10, 2016 – Communion
Rev. Anne G. Cohen, Minister

Luke 10:25-37

For Reflection

“I see that the path of progress has never taken a straight line, but has always been a zigzag course amid the conflicting forces of right and wrong, truth and error, justice and injustice, cruelty and mercy.”

- Kelly Miller, American Sociologist (1863-1939)

What Happened to Mercy?

When I was 11 and our family was in the process of adopting David, a mixed-race Black/Hawaiian child – I would pick up a ringing telephone and hear ugly, ugly voices threatening David’s life, threatening all our lives. They wanted to kill us all – even the White ones of us – because we loved a Black one-year-old child. There was no mercy in those voices.

To this day I only pick up the phone when I recognize the name of the person calling. I have deep anxiety about disembodied voices. And I’m White and privileged and no longer living in Orange County. I wouldn’t dare to presume I know what it’s like to live in this world Black. But I do know that it is perilous – and my worst fear is losing my Black son to violence – and in particular random police violence. I can assume that many of our Black sisters and brothers live with a form of PTSD – from both past and present trauma.

My youngest brother (for whom my son is named) is a police officer – retired last year. When little Peter was a baby – and then a young child – big Pete would take him to the police station and introduce his fellow officers to his nephew. His hope was to cut through learned filters about who Black people are – and help these armed men and women understand that Black and Brown people are someone’s children, family members – they are humans.

And that is exactly what rappers The Game and Snoop Dogg were doing Friday morning here in Los Angeles – historical site of the ‘65 “Riots” and ‘92 “Civil Unrest.”

'Respect is key': The Game, Snoop Dogg lead march to LAPD headquarters, meet with Chief Charlie Beck

Rappers and Los Angeles-area natives the Game and Snoop Dogg led a unification march for men of color Friday morning to the LAPD's graduation of its newest officers, hours after five Dallas police officers were shot and killed and seven others were wounded during a sniper attack.

About 6:30 a.m., the Game posted on his Instagram account a call for black, Mexican and men of all races to march to the Los Angeles Police Department's headquarters to "make the Californian government & it's law branches aware that from today forward, we will be UNIFIED as minorities & we will no longer allow them to hunt us or be hunted by us !!!"

He said women and children should stay away, "THIS IS OUR MISSION FOR THEM," he wrote. The Game, a Compton native whose legal name is Jayceon Terrell Taylor, said in his announcement the march had to be peaceful.

"Do not: bring any weapons or anything illegal. Do not come high or belligerent ... We don't need any HOT HEADS or anyone there for the wrong reasons... We will stand as we are, UNIFIED. I'm calling ALL GANGS, ALL RACES, ALL GROWN MEN affiliated or not & we will stand UNIFIED."

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"The mission is to reintroduce our community to the LAPD... just to get some understanding and dialogue," he said. "We're the ones they're going to be dealing with, we're the ones that are going to be pulled over. ... We're here on peace."

The Game said Friday morning that he was **leading the march as a leader of his community and as a human being**.

"I would be lying to you if I didn't say I was saddened by what happened in Dallas. I would be lying to you if I didn't say I was angered about what occurred in Minnesota and Louisiana and Fresno," he said. "The cops that died in Dallas weren't the cops that shot and killed Philando or Alton. As

much as Philando and Alton didn't deserve that, those cops in Dallas didn't deserve that. And the only thing I could think of was to initiate peace on both sides, so that's why I'm here."

We want peace before it escalates because when that happens ain't nobody safe.

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...When news of the shooting in Dallas broke, the [Game] said, he thought of the families of the officers who were killed.

"I took those police uniforms off of those police officers that met an untimely demise last night and I turned them into what they really are before they put them on," he said. "And those are human beings, like me and everyone standing here."

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-game-snoop-dogg-protest-lapd-20160708-snap-htmllstory.html>
By Ben Poston, Veronica Rocha, Joseph Serna and Kate Mather

And if we need any kind of reminders of what our religion is supposed to be about – that's what it's about. Jesus was about reintroducing groups of people to each other as human beings. There's a meme going around on Facebook – I even posted it to our church Facebook page. In short it says that the message of Jesus is that:

Samaritan lives matter.

Children's lives matter.

Jewish lives matter.

Women's lives matter.

Lepers' lives matter.

Although he loved ALL people –

Jesus was intentional about helping specific groups of people -
the alienated, mistreated, those facing injustice.

Therefore - Black lives matter – is a Jesus thing to say.

[adapted for brevity]

Many of us were amazed to see the power of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ...a court-like restorative justice body assembled in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid in the 1990s. Witnesses who were identified as victims of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements about their

experiences, and some were selected for public hearings. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_\(South_Africa\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_(South_Africa))

Some are calling for just such a process here – now – in the United States. It is a HUMANIZING process – based on restorative justice rather than retributive justice.

Trevor Noah, host of Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show,” addressed this week’s high-profile killings of black men by police officers, arguing it’s possible to be “pro-cop and pro-black.”

You shouldn’t have to choose between the police and the citizens that they are sworn to protect... We all seem to want the same thing and yet the only way we know how to get it is by taking it away from someone else. ...The point is to save lives not trade places.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trevor-noah-shootings_us_577f3674e4b0c590f7e8cb3e

Black journalist Leonard Pitts reminds us that back in 1968 historian Arthur Schlesinger wrote:

“What sort of people are we, we Americans? ... Today, we are the most frightening people on this planet.”

[In 1968] Hundreds of urban riots had wracked the country, the war in Vietnam was uselessly grinding up lives, recent years had seen the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Medgar Evers and Malcolm X...Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy had just been murdered within two months of one another

...On the night Martin Luther King died, two months almost to the day before he himself would be shot down in a hotel kitchen, Bobby Kennedy faced a grief-stricken, largely African American crowd in Indianapolis and with extemporaneous eloquence, prescribed a cure for the sickness he saw.

“My favorite poet,” he told them, “was Aeschylus. And he once wrote, ‘And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God.’”

What we need in the United States is not division. What we need in the United States is not hatred. What we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness but is love and wisdom and compassion toward

one another and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer in our country, whether they be white or whether they be black.”

Those words feel hopelessly idealistic, impossibly innocent and yet, wise, grace-filled and ... right for the raw pain of this moment I commend them to all our wounded spirits on this shining morning from a peaceful place that, as it turns out, is not nearly far enough away.

Email Pitts at lpitts@miamiherald.com

<http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/ODN/BellinghamHerald/shared/ShowArticle.aspx?doc=BHD%2F2016%2F07%2F09&entity=Ar00601&sk=B5325881>

We have our life's work cut out for us. It's been made crystal clear once again. Speaking truth. Hearing truth. Healing and reconciliation. Humanizing one another. Teaching our children – who are already miles ahead of us – to think and act beyond racism into the human family – reestablishing the Beloved Community Jesus begged us to recognize and live into.

May G-d help us to make it so.

Children

Sarah Beila Chankin-Gould

Some resources for parents in case anyone else is wondering about this:

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/.../its-my-job-to-raise...>

It's My Job to Raise Children Who Are Not Only Not Racist But Actively Anti-Racist

<http://www.raceconscious.org/.../100-race-conscious.../>

100 race-conscious things you can say to your child to advance racial justice -...

RACECONSCIOUS.ORG

<http://weneeddiversebooks.org/>

We Need Diverse Books | Official site of the #WeNeedDiverseBooks Campaign

WENEEDDIVERSEBOOKS.ORG

Luke 10:25-37

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life? 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

White silence is violence.

"I don't believe it's possible to be neutral. The world is already moving in certain directions. And to be neutral, to be passive, in a situation like that, is to collaborate with what is going on"--Howard Zinn

http://www.democracynow.org/2005/4/27/howard_zinn_to_be_neutral_to

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About 50 men joined the march to LAPD headquarters.

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The group began planning the march before dawn, the Game said. Organizers spoke with marchers about their unifying, peaceful message so it couldn't be misconstrued by police, and conversely, so they would listen when law enforcement responded.

"We don't have to fear each other today," he said.

The march came amid a growing discussion about law enforcement's relationship with minorities and was preceded by three days of bloodshed.

On Tuesday, Alton Sterling was shot by police in Baton Rouge, La., and cellphone video of the incident went viral. On Wednesday night, Philando Castile was shot in Falcon Heights, Minn. His death was live-streamed on Facebook and also went viral.

Together, the shootings refocused the nation on fatal use of force by law enforcement officers, particularly against people of color. A cellphone video of an unarmed, white 19-year-old man being shot by police in Fresno has also gained media attention.

By Thursday night, protests — many involving the group Black Lives Matter — had sprouted up in major cities across the country. In Dallas, about 800 people were peacefully marching through the city's downtown, flanked by about 100 police officers, when shooting broke out. The shooter, or possibly shooters, targeted police officers and hit 12, five of them fatally.

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“I would be lying to you if I didn’t say I was saddened by what happened in Dallas. I would be lying to you if I didn’t say I was angered about what occurred in Minnesota and Louisiana and Fresno,” he said. “The cops that died in Dallas weren’t the cops that shot and killed Philando or Alton. As much as Philando and Alton didn’t deserve that, those cops in Dallas didn’t deserve that. And the only thing I could think of was to initiate peace on both sides, so that’s why I’m here.”

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Richard Noveles, 29, of Norwalk marched with the group and said that he rejected violence as the answer.

“America needs to wake up and realize where this is going. This thing is escalating, and at the end of the day, it ain’t going to be safe for me or safe for you,” Noveles said. “Everyone is thinking they are safe behind their keyboards and that a hashtag means something. But a hashtag or a keyboard aren’t going to save you once it goes that route and gets violent.”

Snoop Dogg also had this message for the new LAPD officers: “Respect is key.”

“Think about the person you’re pulling over and their family. Because that way, you’ll have more of a consideration of life and de-escalate as opposed to escalate,” he said.

After the graduation ceremony ended and the LAPD’s newest officers threw their hats in the air and hugged, police led a handful of marchers into the department’s glass headquarters. Snoop Dogg and the Game were led to a small room where they and others had a private meeting with L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti, Police Chief Charlie Beck and other top police officials.

It was an impromptu decision. Organizers of the march, which included the Nation of Islam, said they didn’t expect to meet with the chief and mayor.

The group emerged 45 minutes later, after what Garcetti described as an “extraordinarily powerful meeting.” It was another surreal scene: the mayor and police chief of Los Angeles addressing reporters, flanked by famous rappers.

They spoke of the rage they felt this week, seeing videos of police shootings in Baton Rouge and Minnesota, learning that police officers were killed by a sniper in Dallas. They found common ground in that anger, said Beck, whose eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

“This cannot continue,” Beck said. “We cannot continue to break into camps. We cannot continue to go to our corners and come out fighting.”

“We are all furious about what has happened to this conversation – that there is no dialogue, that is it becoming a screaming contest from opposite sides of the room,” the chief continued. “It can’t be that. The way to solve problems is to sit down, to look them in the eye and work it out.”

The Game said he felt restless after the two police shootings of black men that drew national attention this week. He struggled with how to answer his son's questions the police. He couldn't sleep. He was sad, he said, and angry.

When news of the shooting in Dallas broke, the rapper said, he thought of the families of the officers who were killed.

"I took those police uniforms off of those police officers that met an untimely demise last night and I turned them into what they really are before they put them on," he said. "And those are human beings, like me and everyone standing here."

After the meeting, protesters headed back to where they had begun their march near West 3rd and South Beaudry streets. Barry Henderson said it was an important day in police-community relations in L.A.

"All these years and we never took it straight to the police and said, 'This has to stop,' " said Henderson of Marina del Rey. "These people are not taking this no more."

Music mogul Russell Simmons was on hand, congratulating Snoop and others. He then went in to LAPD headquarters to meet with police officials.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-game-snoop-dogg-protest-lapd-20160708-snap-htlstory.html>
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