

Good morning.

To say that our country is in the midst of difficult times is an obvious understatement. We survive 2020, think “it can’t get any worse”, and 2021 hits like a ton of bricks. I won’t go into details on what is happening. People I’ve talked with lately suggest that we are in the end times. Jesus said that’s not for any of us to know when He will return. I do know that every generation has thought that Jesus was returning immediately all the way back to the apostles. The authors of the New Testament wrote with an urgency like He was coming back *the next day!* This is because we live in a fallen world, a morally bankrupt pain machine, to borrow a phrase from my seminary professor. The world has been that way since Adam and Eve shared some fruit and it will end when Jesus returns to Earth to rule and reign.

I also promise not to point any fingers today. There is already plenty of judging going on. I do know that while I may not understand all that’s going on, who caused it, and what we can do about it...I will say that the one who does have the answers is the God who created this universe. He has the Master plan. We don’t always have a clear picture of the plan- or even of God. Sometimes understanding God seems like a really complex puzzle- you know like the ones where all the pieces are the same shape with no good edges...or like the board game Othello- remember that? - A Minute to Learn and a Lifetime to Master...



Well today in the middle of all this complexity, I want to introduce 3 simple truths. If we understood these statements about God and applied them to our lives, they would have the power to heal our country and revive our church.

The seed for this message was planted when I read a storybook to my Kindergarten class about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Two of his quotes from the book stood out to me.

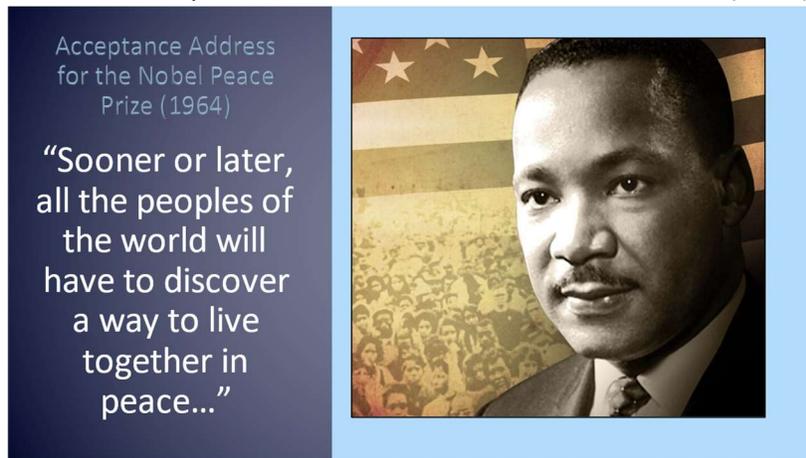
From his book *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967)

Where Do We Go from
Here: Chaos or
Community? (1967)

“Darkness cannot
drive out
darkness: only
light can do that.
Hate cannot drive
out hate: only
love can do that.”



From his acceptance address for the Nobel Peace Prize (1964)



I thought...great words from a strong Godly man but it seems like we are pretty far from achieving this...like maybe we're taking one step forward and two steps back. When you think about all that's going on in the world; if you dwell on the negative, you will be negative. You get sucked down the swirling vortex...and flush.

Instead, I'd like to go the other way- up. These are 3 Biblical truths that relate to this great man's words. They are descriptions of God and Jesus that are in the Bible. Please turn to 1 John chapter 1.

(1 John 1:5) This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

Simple truth #1, God is light. God described Himself this way speaking to Moses in Exodus

(Exodus 33:20) But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

God had to tuck Moses in the cleft of a rock to shelter him from God's glory.

The Apostle Paul explains Jesus this way...

(1 Timothy 6:16) who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

And in Hebrews 12 it says this

(Hebrews 12:28) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Nobody has ever laid eyes on God in this world. But by understanding these descriptions we come to understand better who God is. Saying that God is light, we are speaking to His complete Holiness- there is no darkness or evil in Him. We begin to understand the magnitude and magnificence of God; how awesome and wonderful He is. And we should be afraid...God is

all-powerful, infinite, all knowing. He never changes. He is everywhere...He's a BIG God. But we don't have to be scared...Why? It's in Hebrews 12:28- **Grace**. We have been given His grace and mercy, offered to all, shown in His son Jesus who died for our sins and rose again so we may be spiritually alive. God is BIG but He's on our side.

Knowing that God is light (Truth #1) helps us to better *understand who God is*. Simple truth #2 is God is love.

(1 John 4:8) He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Ouch. John makes it plain there. If you know the love of God you begin to *understand what God did for you*.

(John 3:16) For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Listen to this version- original author unknown- taken from the book Knowing God by Bill Giovannetti

For God — the greatest lover
So loved — the greatest degree
The world — the greatest number
That He gave — the greatest act
His only begotten Son — the greatest gift
That whoever — the greatest invitation
Believes — the greatest simplicity
In Him — the greatest Person
Should not perish — the greatest deliverance
But — the greatest difference
Have — the greatest certainty
Everlasting life — the greatest possession

Everlasting life- the greatest possession. What does that mean? Jesus tells us.

(John 17:3) And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

If you realize that God is love, you begin to understand what He has done for you. Peter said that we have been given everything we need pertaining to life and Godliness. As a Christian, God's love gives us an abundant life where we can have a relationship with that BIG God- and He loves you. God's love can't help but overflow out of you and into the world.

So, simple truth #1- God is light. Simple truth #2- God is love. Simple truth #3 is found in Matthew chapter 11. Jesus is describing Himself.

(Matthew 11:29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle (meek) and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

That word meek and its synonym humble are found throughout scripture. Paul lists it as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

(Galatians 5:22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness (meekness), self-control. Against such there is no law.

King Solomon wrote about it in Proverbs.

(Proverbs 3:34) Surely He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble.

The Hebrew word for scorn means to mock, talk arrogantly, make mouths at. Know anyone who arrogantly runs their mouth? James and Peter quote this verse as well. Here's James's version.

(James 4:6) But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

This last Truth, Jesus is humble, underscores *how we should now act in light of the first two truths*. We have two sides of the coin here- the proud, and the humble.

Merriam Webster defines pride as, "A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired."

I would like to propose a more straightforward definition- **pride is inward trust**.

Pride is self-reliance, all about trusting me, me, me. I can handle it- no problem. I can tell you by personal experience that doesn't work out well.

The opposite then, **humility, is outward trust**.

Babies are humble- they have to trust their parents and caregivers.

Horses are humble- they have to submit to and trust their riders to be successful. Horses are strong animals- but they must be made meek to serve properly.

But we have been given a choice- we have free will- we can choose pride- many do- or we can put our trust in someone or something else to be successful.

Bob Dylan wrote:

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil, or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

Jesus put His trust in God.

(John 5:19) Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

We must also swallow our pride and submit ourselves to, and trust in, God.

- Not to any other person
- Not to our country
- Not to any group
- Not to any movement
- Not to any thing

(1 Peter 5:6) Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time

Allow the relationship to take hold- it will work miracles in your life. He will exalt you- raise you up. Why? The light and love of God that is in you will show off the glory of God.

(Colossians 1:27) To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Christ in you- Christianity is an intensely personal experience. We have to allow God to work in us. If we don't we are like an iceberg- all "Christian-y" on the top but still having a huge underside of pride. It seems like we can't fix things- alone we can't- but God can, through us! He wants to see His light and His love shine through us.

Individually we must make a choice
And then together we can make a change

**(Micah 6:8) He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you?
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?**

If you've read this far and are not a born again Christian, salvation is as easy as "A.B.C."

A- Admit that you are a sinner in need of God

B- Believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again for your sins.

C- Choose that Jesus Christ be Lord and Savior of your life.

Here is a simple prayer you can pray. Dear God, I admit I am a sinner and I need You. Please forgive me of my sins. I believe Jesus died and rose again for my sins. I confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of my life. Thank You for saving me and giving me abundant life here on earth and eternal life with You in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!