Grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to talk to you a little bit about all the things that are going on in our world right now. We've got a lot going on with COVID 19. Our inability to meet together in community for worship has drawn attention to how important community really is to each and every one of us. At the same time, in the last couple of weeks, our attention has been drawn to the injustice of the death of George Floyd and we have also learned about other deaths that have happened in the last few months where life was needlessly taken away from people without provocation and without justice being given in a court of law. And so, our attention has been drawn to this through the protests that have taken place in cities around our country. And we look in at ourselves to say what is happening and how did we get here? We know from the corona virus about how disease can spread so we have secluded ourselves and isolated ourselves at home during this time of isolation. Our need for relationship has been magnified, our need for community, during this time where we have been separated from community. It has spotlighted our need to connect with one another and now we realize that there are those in our community who've been left out of that relationship that we have. They've not felt welcome in many places. They've often felt marginalized. Their opinions haven't held the same weight as others, and they've often felt like when they've been in certain places, people were wondering why they were there, or made statements about how they didn't belong.

Many of us, as we listen to this, in our hearts, we're thinking, I just want to go back to the way things used to be. I just want peace. I want to read to you again some selected verses from our Roman's passage that talk about how we find that peace - Romans Chapter five. Listen to this first verse here, it says, “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace through the Lord Jesus Christ, through which we obtained access to this grace in which we stand, in which we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”

So, we find peace through our faith. In our faith. We were told many times through Jesus that the two most important things we can do is love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. In doing that, as we love God and love our neighbors as ourselves, we want to care for all of God's children. Just the way we would want to be treated.

But again, you may say, but I have not mistreated anybody, I haven't done anything that warrants being racist or doing anything to hurt anybody, I would never do that.

I want to tell you a story about an experience I had a couple months ago. This was during the time that statements were made about Baltimore and about the safety of
Baltimore, suggesting that Baltimore was not a good place to be because of the
demographic diversity.

I was sitting at Arby's having lunch. And as I was sitting there, I observed a
mother with her adult daughter, and they were chatting. I overheard the mother say to
the daughter, “Well, He was only saying what we think, but don't say out loud. I mean,
we don't really want to go there because we are worried about those same things.” As I
heard the mother say that to her daughter, I thought about it and I think about that now
as I watch the protests. I think about all of the people who've been hurt. How many
people have thought things like that, but never said it? Therefore, we feel like, well, I'm
not racist - I've never said anything. But the reality is. Those feelings are inside.

I want to draw your attention to verse eight in Romans verse eight says, “But
God proves his love for us, that while we are still sinners, Christ died for us.

Now, I don't know about you, but I don't really like to be thought of as a sinner. I
know that I make mistakes and I sin. But when somebody else calls me a sinner, that
kind of hurts. I think, “Well, how do you know that I've been sinning” or I think back to
the scripture verse that says it's easier to see the fault in your neighbor than it is to see in
yourself. And I, I cover up my own guilt by thinking about what other people have
done and maybe what I've done hasn't been quite that bad. But here we're told that God
loved us. And sent his son to die for us. Even in our sin. Even with the mistakes that we
made.

Now we all come to church and we say the words of confession, we confess that
we have sinned against God and our neighbors through our thoughts and our actions,
through the things that we say and the things that we left unsaid. But do we really think
about what those words mean? And once we do and we truly repent in our heart, we
can rely on our faith in God, then we can start to find peace as we start to search for
ways to change our behavior and to seek reconciliation with one another.

I want to draw your attention now to the passages from Matthew. In Matthew,
Jesus has been working with these disciples for quite some time now. Once they've
realized a little bit more about who he is and what he's done. He sends them out into
the world. I think once we get to a place where we realize the way things are, we are
being sent out.

We all have different gifts and different talents. And in that, God calls us to be
present in different ways. Here, Jesus sends out the disciples and as he does, he tells
them to go and take nothing extra and just go out into the communities and speak truth.
He says “you are to go and proclaim the good news. The kingdom of Heaven has come
near.” And he tells them that they are to rely on the people around them to help care for
them while they go out and prepare to share this good news. As we rely on each other,
everybody is not going to be asked to go out like those apostles were - to proclaim in the streets. Some people had to welcome them into their homes. People had to provide food for them and clothing because Jesus told them, don't take any extra money. Don't take any extra clothes. Just go out and share the good news of Christ.

You see, we have good news - we know that Christ loved us. We remember that passage from Romans. That says even when we are in sin, Christ died for us. We have that good news and we have faith that even though we mess up, God will help us to do better again next time and help us to try to make things better.

I encourage you; as you look at the scripture readings, think about how God is calling you. In Matthew Jesus tells them that it is not going to be easy. In verse 16, he starts off saying, “I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves. So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Be aware of them, for they hand you over to the councils and flock you in their synagogues and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me as a testament to them and the Gentiles.”

So even as we stand and you see people protesting, it is during that peaceful protest that they are standing out saying justice needs to be done. It's not to hurt anybody. It's not to create pain, but it is to ask for people to love all of God's children. The ministerium in Gettysburg, next Wednesday, the 17th is going to commemorate the nine people who died in Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston five years ago. You see, five years ago, there were people that were sitting around having a Bible study just like what we might do. And a young man came in and they welcomed him into their Bible study to sit and learn with them. During this Bible study where they sought to show God's love to their neighbor, they were killed.

We recognize this day in the Lutheran Church, last year, we voted to consider those people who died living out their faith modern day martyrs for their faith. And to commemorate that, the ministerial in Gettysburg has asked for folks to come and join as we make wearing black. We will stand along the main streets and make the sign of the cross through people standing six feet apart, with masks, in Gettysburg. We will be praying, praying that God will help us as we try to learn how to live with one another in peace? How do we treat each other all as children of God, loving each and every one of our neighbors as we love ourselves?

As we pray and lament the death of these people who didn't deserve to die, we also will be remembering all of the needless death that we have witnessed and over the last several months. We also have lost a lot of other people through sickness, as we've remembered again. As I said, the loss of community and how much community means to us during this time when we've been held apart.

So, let us go out into the world, in whatever way God calls us, to share God's love with our neighbors and to love one another. Amen.