

A Tale of Two Sunday Schools

Why Black Lives Have to Matter to the Church

July 10, 2016 // Trevor Atwood // Genesis 1 - Revelation 22 // Not A Series

This week, on consecutive days, two black men were shot and killed by policemen...both were captured on video.

Alton Sterling was selling music CD's outside a convenience store in Baton Rouge. He was pinned to the ground and shot. The following day in a press conference...his teenage son in heaving sobs "I want my daddy!"

Philando Castile was pulled over for a broken tail light in Minnesota. He was shot in front of his girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds as her 4 year old daughter in the backseat. As they were taken from the car, the mother weeping, the 4 year old comforted her mother saying "Its going to be OK, Momma. I'm right here"

These are not isolated incidents. They keep happening. And we keep making excuses.

Its being spun for gun control...police hate speech...or even blaming the deceased victims for some sort of non-compliance.

Then, on Thursday night in Dallas, 12 police officers were shot, 5 of them killed at a rally in Dallas. As if someone thinks that the answer to this is more killing.

I'm not here today to speak about any of those agendas. I'm not here to stereotype a group of people or a spin a situation. I'm here today to make it as clear to you as I can that violence, racism, and injustice grieve and anger the heart of God...and so, church, it should grieve and anger our hearts to.

And as your pastor, I'm supposed to lead you to love as Christ has loved us.

So that's what we're gonna do today.

For our black brothers and sisters, this is not a 10,000 foot theoretical problem. This is on the ground, in our families. And it is for me today.

My son is black. Does that mean if he's 16 and gets pulled over by the police for a traffic violation and he's in a bad mood that day, that he's more likely to end up with a bullet in his side than my white sons? If so, that's NOT RIGHT. And I mourn that broken reality. That systemic sin.

I also hurt for many police officers who simply woke up this morning with a good desire to serve and protect...and because of their uniform...get angry backlash...or in the case of Dallas...lose their lives as well. That's NOT RIGHT. And I mourn that broken reality.

This morning, we are going to pray for God to move his church...and this church...into mourning for the loss of two men, created in God's image...the loss of at least 5 police officers...created in God's image...because its not right. We are going to mourn racism and violence...because its not right...and we are going to ask Jesus to come quickly...and fix it all.

In the meantime, as we continue to pray, I hope to give you some idea of how we can make this church a picture of gospel harmony that transcends race and culture.

Pray with me.

On Saturday September 14th, 1963. There was a church full of stained glass windows.

There were teenagers excited about the next days events. They were preparing to lead a congregation in worship. It was the annual "Youth Sunday". The boys would wear dark pants and white shirts, the girls would wear white dresses. One of the girls was excited, because she was getting to wear her first pair of high heels on Sunday morning.

That Saturday evening, the pastor was reviewing his sermon notes once more. His text would be Luke 23:34. "Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It was a sermon that would never be preached.

The boys and girls freshly pressed white shirts and dresses would be soiled with blood, and ash, and rubble...and most certainly tears...and the windows. The stained-glass windows.

On Sunday, September 15th, 1963 not a single stained-glass window would remain in the church....except one.

This window was called "The Good Shepherd". It was left totally intact...except for one detail. The face of Jesus had been blown out. Now, It was simply a picture of faceless shepherd. An anonymous. Impersonal. Faceless man with a staff. Standing at a door. Knocking. ...and a congregation, unsure if the man knocking would use his staff for good...or use it to beat them.

Because four girls were dead. Addie Mae Collins was 14. Denise McNair was 11. Cynthia Wesley was 14...and Carole Robertson, in her very first pair of high heels, was 14 years old.

They were dead. Because they had black skin.

That September Sunday in 1963, early in the morning, 4 members of the Ku Klux Klan planted a box of dynamite under the steps of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL. ... and then set it with a timer to go off at 10:22 am....right when the young boys and girls gathered for a Sunday School lesson that would never be taught....but instead, would be tested.

The name of the lesson- "The Love That Forgives"

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said this about the attacks.

"I think of how a woman cried out, crunching through broken glass, My God, we're not even safe in church!" I think of how that explosion blew the face of Jesus Christ from a stained-glass window. It was symbolic of how sin and evil had blotted out the life of Christ. I can remember thinking that if men were this bestial, was it all worth it? Was there any hope? Was there any way out?"

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.- A Testament of Hope, pg 347

Think about this for a second.

What if there was nowhere you could go where you were safe? What if you were like the woman walking through the broken stained glass? Completely powerless to even get some reasonable assurance that your children wouldn't be killed as you sat here and listened to this sermon?

What if your life were so wrecked you wondered if there was hope for any kind of life that was worth living?

What if, just because of the color of your skin, you had a message delivered to you over and over through the use of violent action and violent speech, that you were simply worth less than other human beings with lighter skin? What if you really started to believe you were 3/5 of an actual person? What if the hate started to sink in? What if you actually started to believe you were somewhere between an animal and a person?

What if, because of the sin against you, you couldn't see the face of the Good Shepherd. You couldn't see love in his eyes anymore. What if sin and injustice so blotted out the face of the Jesus ...that you weren't even sure if he cared about you.

What happened that day in Birmingham, was a tragic injustice.

13 years later, and 300 miles down Interstate 65, there was another church in Biloxi, MS, where white boys and girls were gathering for Sunday School. And a young white kindergarten was having a very different experience in Sunday School...

Dr. Russell Moore writes about it in his book "Onward":

"I didn't grow up in the time of segregation. By the time I was born, the schools were integrated and the most significant civil rights and voting rights legislation had been implemented. But I remember Sunday School. Like most churches in my tradition, at the time, we children would go to church each week bearing little envelopes with our offerings for world missions. One week, when I was perhaps four or five, I was fidgeting through the

Bible lesson, and pulled a quarter out of my envelope. Somehow it ended up in my mouth. The lady who was teaching us that day noticed, and, I'm sure, didn't want me to choke on the coin, so she tried to motivate me never to do something like that again. She said, in a memory that stays with me to this day. "That's filthy; why, you don't know whether a black man may have held that coin." Now, this lady was not a Klansman. She probably didn't think of herself as a proponent of white supremacy. The point is that she didn't think at all. She didn't see that her statement was precisely the culture the civil rights movement confronted: the idea that her African-American neighbors were unclean, were something not quite human. It might be my imagination playing tricks on me, but it seems to me that she followed up this statement by gathering the children together to sing "Jesus Loves the Little Children." Her words, moments before, probably didn't sound to her, or to us, contradictory to our singing. "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight; Jesus loves the little children of the world." Jesus loves black people; that's why we brought our dimes and quarters to send missionaries to Africa. But what they touched might make us unclean. She couldn't see that these were two very different gospels, and that only one of them could be true. I suppose if you had asked her why she was perpetuating bigotry in her class, she might have said you were being "political." Her job wasn't to talk about racial tensions or civil rights matters. Her job was to teach children the Bible, and to motivate them to share the gospel around the world. She might have dismissed the whole conversation as a matter of social policy, a diversion from our mission. She would have been wrong."

That Sunday, no bomb went off in that mostly white church in Mississippi...its stain glass windows stayed intact....but that teacher was taking away the face of the Good Shepherd from those little white kids. By implanting in them the idea that the way they love black people is sending missionaries to Africa...but never actually walking across town to love a black neighbor.

Its way past time the church starts putting the face back on the Good Shepherd. His eyes are filled with love...and his heart is to protect his sheep from hate, injustice and death.

That's what I want to show you today. Today, I'm purposely going to use the Bible from cover to cover to show you this. This is not a minor issue tucked away in what someone might label an obscure verse. This is from the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem...the deep desire of God is peace and unity...NOT DESPITE... racial diversity...but through it.

1) God's good plan is all races living in unity. Killing each other is our dumb plan.

There are only 4 chapters in the Bible where everything is perfect. The first 2 and the last 2. Genesis 1-2 tell us about the Garden of Eden. They also tell us God's original intent for humanity...and for the world.

Genesis 1:26-28a

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them

have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it

Our human dignity comes from 2 things. First, and most important...we are created in God's image. Second, we are not animals.

In other words, we are not created to be GODS deciding who gets to live and who has to die, rather, we are to show off God's character in our lives....to image him. Neither are we created to be animals. Just driven by our instincts and desires. We are not created to be driven by fear, self-protection, survival or comfort. Animals must submit to primal desires...King David brings this out in Psalm 8.

Psalm 8:4-6

What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,

We are humans, not God. God is mindful of us and cares for us. We are made in his image for his glory. We are humans, not animals. We reflect God in a way animals can't. Our lives are precious because of this. Every human life is precious because it is uniquely connected to who God is and how God looks and thinks and acts.

Now, take a look at this.

Genesis 1:28

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

From the beginning, God's design is that humans have babies...and those babies fill the earth with many different ethnicities. BTW, if you are wondering “How could that happen?”, I'm not going to take time to scientifically prove that to you this morning...because its really not a question the Bible is trying to answer...though it is scientifically very possible...

But here it is as described in one of Paul's sermons in Acts 17:26. He says “God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,”

In other words, God's plan, from the beginning was to have multiple ethnicities (that's that word "nation")...filling the Earth. From the Garden, multiple races were intended by God to bear his image...to be human alongside each other all over the earth.

When you look at another person, and because of their race, you assume that they are going to act an animal...only being led by their primal desires...you are by definition perpetuating racism.

Differing races should cause us to see humans created in the image of God...and should motivate us to worship God for his loving plan for the world and love people...not pretend to be gods and kill people like animals.

That's the beginning...and then of course...there's the end.

If you want to know God's heart...look at where he taking all of history.

Revelation 21:1-2

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

John sees this picture of what its going to be like when Jesus comes back and brings the perfection of the garden back to earth.

He describes New Heaven and New Earth...no more hurt, or pain, or death, or tears...no more sin and injustice. All evil and chaos has been done away with by God.

Revelation 21:23-27

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then he says, this city will be filled with the light of the glory of God. And I love this...See even the greatest cities in John's time had to close their gates at night to protect against violence from other nations...but not this City in New Creation.

Because of the glory of God, the lights never go out...Evil doesn't stand a chance...so the gates are always open...AND LOOK. WHO'S. COMING. IN!!!!

All Nations. Every ETHNOS. Every race...every culture...bringing the Genesis 1 & Psalm 8 glory that God graciously worked into their ethnicity...and its all...every skin color, every tribal dance, every hand woven bag, every song, every bit of culture made by these ethnicities is given not as CONTRARY to God's glory...but as CONSISTENT with his glory.

Then notice verse 27. NOTHING UNCLEAN gets in the city. You see that? That is what Russel Moore's Sunday School teacher missed in Biloxi, Mississippi. That quarter wasn't unclean because a black man handled it. That Sunday School teacher's heart was unclean because she was calling something unclean that actually brought glory to God.

Listen, from Genesis to Revelation, its stone-cold, lock-down, no-doubt, rock-solid clear... God loves and is and eternally will be glorified by every tribe, tongue, and ethnicity. There is not a human being...anywhere, anytime, any place...who doesn't bear the image of God.

Therefore, Racism of any kind, and the physical and emotional violence that inevitably spews forth from it...is ABSOLUTELY opposed to God. It is evil. FULL STOP.

Its interesting what happens after Adam and Eve decide to try to be gods and distrust who God says he is and who they are. They don't end up valuing human life more...they end up valuing it less and from there the human race only gets worse.

Genesis 4, Cain murders his brother Abel and then callously says when God calls him to account, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Genesis 4:23-24

Then later on in Genesis 4, a guy name Lamech who is the first to twist marriage by having multiple wives, showing he devalues the whole point of marriage, takes revenge on a teenage kid who hurt him by killing him. And he sings this flippant little God-mocking song about it.

See, by Genesis 4, the image of God is so distant in the minds of human beings that they kill people and sing songs about it.

Of course, by Genesis 6:5-6, the thoughts of humans are only evil continually. And it grieved the heart of the LORD...so much so, he started over.

See, God's plan from the beginning is diverse races and ethnicities living in God-glorifying unity...It our sin and rebellion against him...our stupid idea to live for ourselves that brought violence and evil into the world, that turn brother against brother, image bearer against image bearer. Humans start believing they are gods and start killing other humans like they are animals. God help us!...and that's exactly what God did. God became human. He put on flesh....and here's the interesting thing...he didn't put on generic flesh...he became a particular ethnicity...He was born into a particular family...in a particular part of the world. God himself became a Jew. With dark skin, and dark Middle-Eastern eyes.

But it wasn't so he could reveal to the world that one race was superior to others...rather... it was so that through a weak, broken, despised, people with a history of suffering and oppression...that salvation would come to all races...that forgiveness would be offered to all those who bear Gods' image.

See...

2) Jesus got angry and mourned injustice, then he died for his enemies.

First, I want to remind you of Jesus' mission. God did not become human in Jesus Christ simply to set a good example for us. He didn't descend and then die a shameful death on a cross so we would see that and go, "You know what, we really need to start acting right. Lets love each other more." That is not at the heart of Jesus' mission.

See, after the flood in Genesis 6, God started over with humanity. But People verse 2.0 didn't go so well. There were system failures and syntax errors from about day 2 coming off Noah's Ark.

It started with Noah getting drunk and naked...which is a bad combination always...See, no matter how hard humans tried, we didn't get better, we got worse. Finally, there's this event in Gen 11 where people come together, denying their humanity, and they try to be gods. They intentionally reject God's plan to have many ethnicities all over the earth. And they decide to build a tower to the heavens. They want to have one race, one language... instead of using their image of God to go out and make culture that fills the earth.

But God, once again, intervenes. And he multiplies their language and spreads them out over the earth, because he is absolutely intent on having many nations love and worship him....not one race loving and worshipping themselves.

And so, in the very next chapter, God chooses Abraham, and promises to make a great nations...through whom he will bless every family on the earth.

Jesus is the way God makes good on that promise. Jesus is the descendant of Abraham that comes to save humanity from our self-worship.

See, Jesus didn't come to set a good a example. God became human in Jesus Christ so that he could remove God's wrath toward our self-worshipping sin...and he could replace it with his own God-pleasing righteousness.

Jesus came to die for us...so we could live. Even though our sin was against him...that is the gospel. That is the good news that gives us hope. Because God promises that as we are reconciled in a relationship to him...so we will be reconciled to each other...every tribe, tongue and nation.

But I want you notice something. In Jesus time on earth, even though he has this one consuming, cosmic mission that he is absolutely laser focused on...he doesn't look at the injustices around him and say, "You know what, I'm fixing all this with my death and resurrection. You guys are all concerned with these social issues, but you should be focusing on the gospel."

Instead, he enters into the hurt, the pain, the sadness...he feels it...he walks with his friends through it...and he makes his anger and sadness toward sin and injustice A PART of his mission.

Look, there are 3 times in the New Testament that Jesus is described as angry.

Mark 11:15-17

And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

Jesus is so angry that he's turning over tables. But why? It's not simply because people have turned the temple into a money making machine...its because they are lying about God's heart for all nations.

That's why Jesus quotes from the prophet Isaiah. This court of the Gentiles is supposed to be a statement to all the non-Jewish ethnicities of the world that God is going to welcome them in...instead its been turned into a place for the Jews to profit off of them.

Jesus is angry at men twisting his heart for all races and cultures into a Title Loan/Cash Advance business.

Here's a second instance of Jesus' anger.

Mark 3:1-6

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Do you see what Jesus gets angry at here? He is angry at the lack of compassion that these Pharisees show. They are caught up in condemning Jesus, and in so doing, they would prevent Jesus from healing this hurting and broken man. Jesus looks at their silence...that represents their hardness of heart...and he is angry. He grieves it...and he still reaches out to this broken man and heals him.

And look...as he heals, as he grieves...look how its being folded up into his bigger mission. He heals this man, he grieves the Pharisees hardness of heart...and that begins the Pharisees plans to destroy him. Which of course, will lead to the cross...where he will ultimately heal all our hurts.

Jesus is grieved at hard hearts. He is angry at compassion-less, empty religion. He loathes when we don't speak up for life...when we remain silent about doing good rather than harm...and then he goes to the cross and dies for us.

I've got one more place to you show Jesus' anger.

In John chapter 11, Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus is sick. By the time Jesus arrives to Lazarus' house, Lazarus is dead...and then some very interesting things happen. See Lazarus has 2 sisters. Martha and Mary.

When Jesus gets to their house, Martha goes out to Jesus and says, "If you would have been here, my brother wouldn't have died." And Jesus explains the gospel to her.

Take a look.

John 11:23-27

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

So, in the face of death is the gospel appropriate? YES. YES. And YES. Jesus is still laser focused on his mission. But now watch what happens when Mary, Lazarus' other sister comes to Jesus.

John 11:32-35

Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply

moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept.

Did you see that? Even though Jesus...of course...knows the gospel. Jesus knows the theology...he doesn't just know what he is going to do on the cross...he knows that IN 10 MINUTES he is going to raise Lazarus from the dead...[PAUSE] HE STILL WEEPS WITH the Grieving Mary. He sheds tears.

...and he's angry. That phrase “deeply moved and greatly troubled”...that conveys anger. But what's Jesus angry at?

He's angry at death. And he will stand in front of Lazarus' tomb and from deep grief and anger, but with a cosmic hope will pray to his Father...and then he will raise Lazarus from the dead.

Anger. Grief. Tears. Even though he's absolutely certain that Lazarus is not going to stay dead. Now watch how this is all folded up into Jesus' cosmic mission to save the world.

John 11:53

So from that day on [the Pharisees] made plans to put [Jesus] to death.

See, When Jesus stopped Lazarus' funeral...he was beginning his own. He was drawing the hate and scorn of the self-worshipping Pharisees. He was starting up the Road to the cross...where he would become our sin, where he would end Death forever...

Listen to me. Jesus standing in front of the temple didn't ask, “Should I be angry about this ethno-centric systemic injustice that is contrary to the heart of God?” No, he acted. He spoke up.

Jesus, standing in front of the man with a withered hand, did he ask, “Should I have compassion on this man, after all, it is the Sabbath, and who knows what kind of man this is... maybe he's a bad guy...maybe he's a thug...” Truth is...Jesus knew every terrible thing that man ever did. But Jesus had compassion...and he acted...and he was angry at the hard hearts of the Pharisees who had no compassion.

Jesus, standing in front of Mary, didn't say, “STOP all this boo-hooing, Why are you crying? I'm about to raise him from the dead. Your problems aren't real, you just don't have a good perspective.” No, instead he sobbed with his friends...he wept with those who wept... and then he flared his nostrils, and with an angry snort...he stared death in the face and brought Resurrection.

Church...The heart of God should be our heart. We should Do Justice, Love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

We should be angry at death. We should grieve hard-hearts. We should be deeply troubled by racism, and systemic injustice.

We should talk about it. We should act against it...and in the end...we don't respond violently to it...instead, like our Lord and Savior, we seek to die for our enemies.

We put our lives, our necks, on the line in order to show people the love that Christ showed to us. The answer to evil is not evil.

No one sums this up better than the apostle Paul, the former racist and murderer...until he saw that Jesus died for him to save him

Romans 12:9-21

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Listen to me. If you see a black person, a white person, a Hispanic person, a Native American, an Indian person, a Middle Eastern person...and your FIRST THOUGHT is not...THAT PERSON, that race, that ethnicity, that culture is now and forever bringing glory to GOD... Instead its, "There's a thug, or there's a privileged jerk, or there's a terrorist.." If your first thought is how that person might hurt you instead of how they might glorify God...then repent. That's evil. Instead look to what Christ did for you...and for that person. Overcome evil with good. If your first thought when you see a policeman is, "That person is going to abuse authority and hurt someone of a minority race." Repent and look to Jesus. Overcome evil with good. Begin to see others through the lives of sacrificial love. Love that dies for those that threaten us. Love that sees through sin...and sees new creation. Weep with those who weep. Be hospitable. Risk your reputation. Open up your life. Give yourself away. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, and be constant in prayer.

Leave vengeance to God. And in the meantime, live peaceably with all as you overcome evil with good. Because Jesus overcame your evil with his good.

Be angry at injustice, weep with those who weep...and then die for your enemies.

...because in Jesus...the Resurrection and the Life...though you die...yet shall you live.
See...

3) Our hope is New Creation. Our lives should show that.

When Jesus died on the cross, he said "It is finished." By that, he meant that there was no stopping his plan to save us, and the whole world, from sin and death.

See, when Jesus died and resurrected, he was guaranteeing that his plan was going to succeed. That Revelation 21...all sin, all death, all nations gathered together in peace with him...that it was all going to happen. A sure hope.

But, until he comes back, we still have to endure the broken nature of the world. That means, that in this broken creation, we still experience pain, injustice, racism, violence.

But for anyone who has put their faith in Jesus Christ as their only hope of salvation...that person has the spirit of God. Who reminds us of the truth. That in the face of the deepest, darkest evil...that God has already, and will yet still do something about it. That he will not leave us as orphans, but he will come and make all things new.

In Romans 8, Paul tells us what this is like.

He says that all creation is looking to the church, the adopted sons and daughters of God, and its like all of broken creation is jealous that we have God's spirit in us...renewing us from the inside out.

In other words, the rocks and trees, and mountains and rivers have to wait for renewal, but in us, in humans, in God's adopted children...the renewal has already started.

2 Corinthians 4:16 & 2 Corinthians 5:17

In Christ, we already are a part of this New Creation he is bringing. Where all races and nations and languages will be reconciled to each other and to God.

We have become Christ's body. We have become his Ambassadors. And by living in the truth of New Creation, we tell this broken world the true story...that Jesus is coming back to fix it all.

We ought to be living our lives to show that race doesn't separate us...instead, we are bound together in New Creation, in Jesus' resurrection.

The church becomes the face of the Good Shepherd that was blown out of that stain glass window in Birmingham. The church becomes the hands and feet of the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his enemies.

We echo Alton Sterling's son when he said, "I just want my daddy." Romans 8:15 says the adopted children of God cry out to our daddy...we need you...we want you...to fix this broken creation.

The church becomes the voice of Diamond Reynold's little 4 year old girl outside that bloody car in Minnesota, "Its gonna be OK, dear Momma. We're right here with you. And we'll weep with you until Jesus comes back and makes this right."

In fact you know the way the Bible ends?

Revelation 22:20-21

It ends with the word Maranatha- Come quickly Lord Jesus. Come quickly Jesus...Meanwhile, give us your grace. Amen.

Church, as we continue to beg Jesus to come back and make all things new. Lets weep with those who weep. Stop making excuses or being afraid you are going to make a political statement you don't like. When you see death. Weep. Cry out. Daddy, come get us.

Let me put a couple of handles on this before we leave today... in case you're asking What can I do?

- 1) Pray. Pray for hurting families of victims. Pray for police officers. Pray for God to open up your eyes to injustice and to beg him to take away your hard heart. He grieves our hard hearts, so should we.
- 2) Weep with those who weep. Feel this....and hurt. If you are numb to this...then find someone who isn't and have a conversation. Not to argue or defend your point, but to hear what they are saying and hurt with them.
- 3) When is the last time you intentionally put yourself out of your comfort zone to start a relationship with someone of the opposite race? Its hard to stereotype and hate when you know someone by name..and you know their story. Need a place to start? Start here in our church. Start in your neighborhood. When is the last time someone of a different race or culture was around your dinner table?
- 4) Stop talking about this on Facebook and start talking about it at your home. If you have posted about this on social media but haven't brought your kids into the conversation, see if your priorities are more about preaching to our culture, than showing the next generation the beauty God has created in our diversity...and the way we mourn. If your kid can speak and understand you, you can have this conversation. For a 3 year old, it might be, "I want you to know that there are some ugly things happening in our country right now. People are hurting each other because they don't see different skin colors the way God does. All colors of skin are beautiful to God, but sometimes, our sinful hearts tell us a different

story. I want to listen to what God says about this. And help other people see it to. God is hurt because of the way we are hurting each other. So lets love people the way Jesus loves us.”

For some of you, its going to be a more difficult conversation, Some of you African-American brothers and sisters are going to have to teach your kids to act a certain kind of way at a traffic stop that White brothers and sisters won't have to have with their kids. Its not right. Its not Ok. Its broken. But don't let that be the final word. Bring them back to the deep hope they have in Jesus Christ.

And as we disciple the next generation, maybe there will be more people that see each other through the lens of the gospel...and that will not only be a beautiful thing for the world...it will be a beautiful thing for eternity.

And then as our kids grow up to be Sunday School teachers.. they will tell our grandchildren about a time in American history when Jesus cleaned up their filthy hearts...instead of warning us about handling filthy coins. Maybe...by overcoming evil with good...we'll start to put the face back on the Good Shepherd...one act of love at a time.