

**A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO RIOTING  
MATTHEW 5:43-45 / 6-3-20 / FACEBOOK**

**INTRODUCTION**

- A. Since the May 25 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, cities across America have experienced violent protests, looting, destruction of property, personal injuries and, unfortunately, some loss of life.
1. Even OKC has experienced, on a smaller scale, peaceful protests turned into rocks, bottles and glass thrown at police and some police respond in kind with flash bangs and tear gas.
  2. What happened to George Floyd should have never occurred, but violent social unrest isn't the right way to respond.
  3. So now not only are we reeling from the effects of Coronavirus but also from radical social unrest.
- B. Did you know that rioting is mentioned eighteen times in the Bible (3 in O.T. and 15 in N.T.).
1. The prophet Jeremiah—Jeremiah 26:7-9.

Jeremiah 26:7-9

*7 The priests, the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of the Lord. 8 But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the Lord had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die! 9... And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.*

2. Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry—Luke 4:28-30.

Luke 4:28-30

*28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.*

3. The Apostle Paul—Acts 17:5, 19:32.

Acts 17:5 (In Thessalonica)

*But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city.*

Acts 19:32 (In Ephesus)

*The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.*

4. At Jesus' Crucifixion—Matt. 27:17, 20-22.

Matthew 27:17

*So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?"*

Matthew 27:20-22

*20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. 21 "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. 22 "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!"*

- C. A new research paper by Omar Wasow, a political scientist from Princeton University, found that **"nonviolent protest tends to provoke sympathy while violent protests tend to polarize and even empower the protesters political opponents."**

For example, Wasow found that the civil rights movement's nonviolent protests in the early 1960s were effective in changing public opinion, but that changed drastically when the protests turned violent in the late 60's.

## I. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE RIGHT WAY TO RESPOND TO SOCIAL UNREST?

- A. First, the Bible warns that its wrong for Christians to respond to social injustice with more social injustice.

1. Jesus said as much in the Sermon on the Mount—Matt. 5:43-45.

Matthew 5:43-45

*43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor[a] and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

2. Luke's account of this same passage add something—Luke 6:27-29.

Luke 6:27-29

*27 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.*

3. This response stands in stark contrast to the way the world treats their enemies.
4. Jesus' point is that Christians should never return hate for hate but fight hate with love. This is very different from what we are seeing on our television screens.

5. The Apostle Paul agrees with Jesus' words—Roman 12:17-18 and 12:21.

Romans 12:17-18

*17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

Romans 12:21

*Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.*

- B. Second, when we take matters into our own hands, we are usurping God's authority—Romans 12:19.

Romans 12:19

*Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

## II. WHAT LESSONS CAN WE LEARN FROM WHAT'S GOING ON TODAY?

- A. Not all protesters are rioters and not all policemen are abusive.
- B. There is a place for nonviolent protest in order to bring about positive change.
- C. Christians should take a stand for what's right but do so in the right way.
- D. Christians must overcome evil with love which is not our natural tendency.
- E. We live in a fallen world that will never be completely socially just.
- F. Our lost world desperately needs Jesus today.
- G. The only thing that will bring about total social justice in our world is the return of our Lord Jesus Christ—Rev. 21:4.

Revelation 21:4

*4 'He (Jesus) will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'*

## CONCLUSION

- A. "Maranatha" is an Aramaic term found only once in the N.T. in First Corinthians 16:22.
- B. It was used by early Christians as a greeting.
- C. Maranatha means "**Come Soon Lord Jesus**". Let this be our prayer today.

D.