

Dear Disciples

April 23, 2021

Transcript

Hello, Disciples.



The collective rejoicing in the last week in the U.S. after the guilty verdict came in for Derek Chauvin convicting him on three counts for the murder of George Floyd was palpable across the country. Guilty. Guilty. Guilty. The jury found Derek Chauvin guilty on all three counts.

We don't usually see the justice system hold white police officers accountable for the death of Black people. We heard the moving reactions from Mr. Floyd's family, from leaders, in the civil rights struggle, and we were reminded that, at least in this moment, we could breathe.

Yet we know that nothing will bring Mr. Floyd back to his family and his death leaves a hole that will remain with them forever. But they have claimed victory in this moment as part of the work that we all must do to ensure that policing reforms in the United States are codified in federal law.

Sadly, even as we exhaled after this guilty verdict, we were still reeling from the shooting death of 20-year-old Duante Wright, shot by an officer who said she intended to reach for her taser.

The question must be asked, why must deadly force always be the option that police turn to, and why is this happening so widely against Black and brown people even in the most mundane traffic stops?

And then a 14-year-old Latino boy, Adam Toledo, who complied with the order to drop his weapon, he turned and he put his hands up and in the next second he was shot and killed.

And now, in the past couple of days, word of the shooting of Ma'khia Bryant has come. Yet another Black person dead at the hands of police. We don't have all the details yet on Ms. Bryant's case, but the reality is this: It is its own pandemic. Black people are dying at the hands of police in situations that should not require the use of deadly force or the loss of life.

When we comply, we die.

When we drop our weapons, we die.

When we put our hands up, we die.

When we turn over our license and registration, we die.

When we are being stopped and we ask what are we supposed to do, why are we being stopped, we die.

When we do what we're supposed to do, we die.

Those of us who believe that we are all created in God's image, who believe that our highest call is to love God and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, to love one another as Christ has loved us, we must see this verdict not only as a moment to celebrate, or even to breathe, but to reaffirm our commitment to work for the flourishing of all of us.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is before the U.S. Senate. If the church is silent on these issues of human justice, human flourishing, human dignity, human life, we are complicit. If the church is silent about the policing practices that make it acceptable to simply shoot and kill Black and brown people without any attempts to de-escalate or resolve situations without deadly force, we are complicit.

Speak up to your own legislators urging passage of this law at the federal level. But also speaking up in your own local jurisdictions for reforms at the city, county and state level.

Church, this is not about politics, left or right. This is about what is right, and what is wrong. This is about human dignity, human life, human flourishing.

Dr. King wrote in "Strength to Love," that the church must be reminded that we are neither the master nor the slave of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.

We must continue to be those prophetic voices for justice and righteousness, following Jesus who claimed for himself the call to preach good news to the poor, to set at liberty those who are captive, to bind up the broken hearted and oppressed. To love our neighbor is not only to want for them but to work for them, to work for the flourishing of all humanity.

To be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world is to name the brokenness and to work diligently to repair it. To be an anti-racist church is to name the systems that oppress us and work to dismantle them.

I'll continue to say it, and I'll continue to pray for it.

And I pray that every day you will ask, "is what we are doing helping us to be the church we say we are?" Is what we are doing helping us to name places of fragmentation and repair them? Is what we are doing helping us to be an anti-racist church by naming and dismantling systems of racist oppression?

Every day we must ask ourselves how we are bearing witness to the limitless love of God. We must be the active conscience of a society that is so terribly broken and fragmented.

We have so much love and hope to share because of Jesus Christ.

We must be the church we say we are.

God bless you and remember that God loves you and so do I.