

Monday, June 1, 2020

There is no longer black or white

- Pastor Hank French

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

This short text is one of the most important in the New Testament. Written by Paul to the Christians in Galatia, it refutes a notion common in the 1st century and common in the 21st century and common in all the centuries in between. And that notion? The idea that people can be labeled by the powerful so the powerful can dismiss, oppress, exploit the powerless.

Along with refuting this idea, Paul affirms it's opposite, namely that in Christ we are all one. One in value, one in dignity, one in bearing the image of the God by whom we were created. We are one in God's love, one in God's forgiveness, one in God's mercy and compassion. This is a message our world desperately needs to hear today as Minneapolis/St. Paul burns and riots rock the Twin Cities.

If Paul were to write this text today, in this context, he would no doubt add the words, "there is no longer black or white; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Martin Luther King Jr., a pastor and civil rights activist of the 1960's, once declared: *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*

In the Gospel of John, Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (8:12). And in the beginning of the Gospel, the writer says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5). To quote Martin Luther King again, *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that."*

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). To quote Martin Luther King again, *"Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*

These are the marching orders for Christians in a world of increasing darkness and hatred: Bring the light of Christ into the darkness through love. This is not an option for Christians; it is an imperative.

To quote Martin Luther King one more time, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Which is to say that positive change may take a long time, but it does happen, and it will continue to happen. What people in our time—particularly those who follow Jesus, the light of the world—need to decide is which end of the "arc of the moral universe" they choose to stand on: darkness and hate or light, love and justice.

Prayer: Holy God, give me the faith and courage to move toward the far end of the arc of the moral universe; help me to move toward light, love and justice. Amen.