

Most Holy Trinity Sunday, Cycle A

Exodus 34:4b-6; 8-9; 2Corinthians 13:11-13; and John 3:16-18

The protests and rioting in the wake of George Floyd's murder seem to me a logical progression of events in America at this time. Everyone is exhausted and frazzled from the pandemic, but black communities have had higher infection rates and have also been hit harder economically. This frustration converged with the frequent killing of black people by police and dissent erupted.

Reactions vary. Some call for increased force. Some wring their hands with immobile surprise. Others, like Tamika Palmer, whose daughter, Breonna Taylor, was shot to death during a raid in April, have called for nonviolence. After seven people were killed in Louisville protests, Palmer said, "Please keep demanding justice and accountability, but let's do it the right way without hurting each other. We can and we will make some real change here. Now is the time. Let's make it happen, but safely."

Her voice echoes St. Paul's at the end of 2Corinthians. In 1Corinthians, Paul directed the community to stop doing all the things that tore it apart and live as one Body, patient, kind, forgiving, bearing, trusting and hoping all things. But then, Paul failed to return to Corinth as promised, not once but three times. Meanwhile, other missionaries came to town, dissing Paul and preaching a gospel that reinforced the destructive ideas of self-promotion and self-centeredness already running rampant. 2Corinthians is Paul's humble effort to rebuild both their community and his relationship with them.

Closing the letter, Paul makes five recommendations: Rejoice. Mend your ways (or put things in order). Encourage one another. Agree with one another. Live in peace. These are, each one, a choice. As Maria A. Pascuzzi notes, "Whether Paul is absent or present, the Corinthians ... are responsible for the continual renewal of their lives and the work of reconciliation."¹ When people today say, "We have no choice but to respond with violence," that is not true. We always have a choice. In fact, if we do not choose the good, who will do it for us? No one. Like the Corinthians, the choice is ours.

Where is our motivation to make the hard choices for a united community that is life-giving to all? When Moses was on Mt. Sinai sealing the covenant with God on behalf of the Israelites, they were already worshipping another god. Amazingly, God responded by inviting Moses onto Mt. Sinai again for a renewal of the covenant. There, God told Moses God's name – in other words, who God really is, not who we imagine God to be. Listen to the adjectives: "a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity." The connotations are awesome! *Merciful* means compassionate as a mother is to the child of her womb. *Gracious* means showing favor because the other is beloved. *Slow to anger* includes patience and long-suffering. *Kindness* indicates continuous outpouring of divine goodness or steadfast love. *Fidelity* means firmness, constancy, loyalty and faith. Together, *kindness and fidelity* describe the abounding, incomparable and unconditional love that God continually pours out on creation. Yowzah! This is who God is! God cannot *not* be this! And this love is aimed at us – even when we set up our own golden idols in place of God.

Can we know we are loved this way and remain the same? Moses bowed down and said, "do come along in our company." The Israelites needed God's love because they were "indeed a stiff-necked people" and God's love could transform them. God's love can transform us too. Take heart from this and the further step we are told God takes in John 3. Ancients believed God was too different from humans to be seen face-to-face, but God found a work-around: God became a human being, "so that everyone who believes in [Jesus] might not perish." God is constantly finding ways to share with us the love we need to actualize Tamika Palmer's call. "We can and we will make some real change here. Now is the time. Let's make it happen, but safely."

- ❖ Sit with God's name from Ex 34:6 and let the love enfold you. What happens for you?
- ❖ How will you take action today for the continual renewal of your life and the work of reconciliation?

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¹ *First and Second Corinthians, New Collegeville Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, Liturgical Press, 2005, p. 144.