

1

Trinity Sunday, Year A
Holy Spirit, West Haven

8 minutes, 46 seconds. 8 minutes, 46 seconds. It's a long time. In 8 minutes, 46 seconds, some people can run mile. In 8 minutes, 46 seconds, some people can read a chapter in a book. In 8 minutes, 46 seconds, some people can delve into google searches and find themselves scanning endless links. In 8 minutes, 46 seconds a human being can kneel on the neck of another human being, an action that can result in death. George Floyd died in such a way. Another human being kneeling on his neck, snuffing the life out in his body. 8 minutes, 46 seconds.

The injustice in this action, the violence, the obvious racism...it goes beyond not respecting the dignity of every human being. I can find no words to speak to the depth of feelings and reactions I have to this action. It is unfathomable and yet...there it is. And it's true. And it demands action.

Last Thursday the Racial Healing, Justice and Reconciliation Network held a service of Reflection and Prayer. It was an opportunity for members of the Episcopal Church in CT to come together to pray and share our feelings of sadness, anger, grief, despair, and disillusionment that we are all experiencing at this time. The hour and half gathering was a time for honest sharing, voicing of outrage, shedding of tears, and joining together in our desire to address systemic racism and white supremacy. We ended our time together in 8 minutes, 46 seconds of silence. 8 minutes and 46 seconds. It's a long time. It's a really long time.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus commands us to make disciples of all nations ...teaching them to obey everything that I commanded you. Everything I have

commanded you...It's long list if we think of all the ways Jesus has guided us in our thinking and our practices, and yet we all know the ones that comes to the top of the list....Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself.

That's our work. Those are the commandments that we are called to teach in the name of Jesus. Let's think for a moment about the word "teach". Think about the teachers, the good teachers, you have had in your life. Who are the ones who inspired you? who guided you to be your best self? who saw in you the light and called it out of you? who invited you to grow and deepen your understanding of who you are...and who you can be?

I have a list of those teachers. They are not the ones who stood in front of me and shared all they knew and invited me to open my brain and receive it into my mind. They were not ones who lectured. They were ones who engaged me, my whole person, my whole self. And, they were the ones who modeled for me what they were asking of me. They were authentic, showing me in their lives how to be a whole person -wise, compassionate, and kind...and how to respect the dignity of every human being... all human beings...made in the image of God, according to God's likeness...blessed by God (Gen 1).

In a way, the best teachers saw their teaching as opportunities to create space for transformation, not just for receiving information. So how are we to teach? How are we to teach God's commandments, "How are we to model the life we are inviting others to see and learn?

You can do a lot in 8 minutes, 46 seconds. Some people can run a mile. Bill Rodgers one of the greatest marathon runners of my lifetime, said the hardest part of any run is the beginning...starting...the first mile. If Bill Rodgers can say that, I can know that when I feel that way, it's normal, it's natural. And it's not an excuse not to start. What can you do in 8 minutes, 46 seconds?

You can read a chapter of a book addressing Anti-Racism...White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism by Robin DiAngelo or How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi. If that's the first mile...keep reading...slowly...reflect on what changes you might need to make to do this work, what unconscious biases to do you need to mine, explore, and change. I say you...I mean all of us...myself included. I have so much work to do to learn about my own places of white privilege, my unconscious biases, exploring the messages I received in my childhood and throughout my life that consciously or unconsciously taught me about creating division rather than celebrating diversity. To do this work, I need to read and reflect...and I need to act, to try on new ways of being, modeling as much for myself as for others what means to love my neighbor as myself. Myself with all its privilege and power. What do I need to examine and redefine, to share, and to let go of ...to really love my neighbor as myself? All my neighbors. All God's children.

In 8 minutes, 46 seconds some people can delve into Google searches and endless links....linking you to TEDs Talks about addressing your own bias, resources on how to talk to your children about racism, how to seek to build beloved

4

Trinity Sunday, Year A
Holy Spirit, West Haven

community. That's the first mile. Then its stepping into that work. Leaning into it. Trying it on. Doing it. Owning that our feelings can range from fear to excitement, sadness to courageous...and countless other truths.

And here the voice of Jesus steps in and says, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Jesus is with us in this work. Helping us, walking with us, guiding us we move from despair to hopeful action, from dismay and chaos to new life...A created new life that is very good.

As teachers of the Gospel, we have work to do. Let us be about our work so that the world can see and know this new creation, a world that respects the dignity of every human being...where we genuinely love our neighbors as ourselves.

AMEN

May 31, 2020

5

Trinity Sunday, Year A
Holy Spirit, West Haven