

In my daily devotional, one of the things it suggests is to reread a section of scripture several times to see what words or phrases stands out for you. While reflecting on today's scriptures, several things stood out.

I see some biblical parallels between today's scriptures and what is presently happening in America. I believe that, like in ages past, God has heard the cries of his people throughout, not just America, but the world. People all over the world are beginning to rise up against authoritarianism and injustice.

Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people...; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them..." EXODUS 3:7-8

At the time that he was called by God, Moses was said to be 80-years old, older than our two Presidential candidates. In chapter four of Exodus, we learn that Moses had a speech impediment, like one of our Presidential candidates. Moses even tried to use that as an excuse to not be the voice of God for the Israelites, but God would have none of it.

Friends, America today is in troubled waters. It needs good people of faith to speak truth to power in order to overcome the fear and injustices that are happening to our people.

Our passage in Romans today reminds us to "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor."

In America today...

- Roughly 29 million adults say their household often does not have enough food to eat.
- Almost 15 million renters say they are behind on rent.
- The National Low-Income Housing Coalition estimates that 40 million U.S. households are projected for eviction by year's end.

Americans tend to be a private people. We don't like to ask for help. But many of our neighbors are hurting and, for Christians, we are called to help. We must come together as a people to overcome these troubled times we are living in.

But there are dark forces in the world who wish to keep us divided and living in fear of one another. However, faithful people have nothing to fear. This is why the Apostle Paul calls us to “Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.” Living in this time of social media where one can hide behind the facade of avatars and caustic memes aimed at our perceived enemies, we can be tempted to go to the dark side. It is too easy to forget the words of wisdom found in Paul’s message:

“Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” ROMANS 12:16-18

Again, it is easy to be seduced by the anonymity of social media when we go on the attack, but we must remember that, as Christians, we represent Christ to the world.

So, what can we do to bring unity, justice and hope to our fellow citizens? First of all, since we live in a representative democracy, you should write your representatives and insist that they act now to pass funding that will aid those who are in need of food and shelter because if we continue to have people who are weak with hunger and without shelter during this time of COVID-19, we may experience a plague like no other.

Next, remember the story of the loaves and fishes that Jesus used to feed 5,000? The beauty of that miracle was that once Jesus blessed the food and began passing it out among the people he knew that they would overcome any selfishness and begin to share any food that they had brought with them that day. You know the early church lived communally where they shared everything that they had with one another and so we too must learn to share what we have with our neighbors when necessary.

If you have the resources to buy some extra food; then use that to give to the local food pantry. If you know of a struggling young family that could use diapers, buy some for them. If you have a neighbor out of work, but you could use some help around the house with something; then hire them to do the work.

Paul reminds us that Christians are to be instruments of God's justice in the world. However, justice must be brought about in the way of Jesus, overturning the status quo when necessary, but always out of love, particularly toward the disadvantaged.

This is not the time for us to sit back and be idle, we must rise to the occasion to help our fellow Americans in need. With God's blessings and hard work, we can overcome these troubled waters that we find ourselves in.

So, let us begin our work with a prayer of confession:

Forgive us, Father, for squandering the riches and resources you've entrusted to us. Forgive us for being ungrateful for, and for taking for granted your presence with us and the inheritance that is ours in Christ. Forgive us for being more concerned about ourselves than about your children who are lost and separated from their families. Forgive us for not making room in our hearts for the immigrants in our land; the injustices to our neighbors; and for the heart of Jesus to be about his Father's business in us. Forgive us for running away from or pushing away your love. Give us grace to allow you to embrace us with your love and to embrace one another with that same love. Though we are not worthy, you love us and celebrate over us. Father, we praise you and ask that you bless us with your wisdom, so that the poor may not be oppressed and the rich may not be oppressors. Make us a nation having no authority but that of Love. We pray in the name and the way of Jesus. Amen.