

## TMUC Church at Home – Sunday June 7

### Reflection:

Change can happen.

Just when we think that things are at an end, we find a beginning.

Change can happen, hope can live.

What a week this has been. A light of truth is being shone on racism and oppression and all their manifestations. People around the globe are protesting – gathering together at great risk to themselves. People are marching and calling for change.

On Friday, city workers in Washington DC painted the words Black Lives Matter onto 16th Street right behind the White House and at the corner of 16th and H street, the name of the intersection is now Black Lives Matter Plaza. And, loudspeakers are playing the voices of current and historic civil rights leaders. People are making noise that our voices might be heard.

And, people are silent. This week it was #BlackoutTuesday which saw so many of us stop all our Social Media posts except a black screen. The goal was to redirect our time from Social Media posting to our own education.

I reached for some books that I had purchased at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa.

On #BlackoutTuesday I read, again, some of the story of Lilian Ngoyi and Helen Joseph. On August 9, 1956, they led 20,000 women in South Africa carrying a petition for the Prime Minister.

*We are women from every part of South Africa.*

*We are women of every race, we come from the cities and the towns, from the reserves and the villages – we come as women in our purpose... We shall not rest until all pass laws and all forms of permits restricting our freedom have been abolished. We shall not rest until we have won for our children their fundamental right to freedom, justice and security.*

*When the Prime Minister would not receive them, the women stood in silence for 30 minutes as a sign of protest. Helen wrote: "The clock struck. It was the only sound. I looked at those many faces until they became only one face, the face of the suffering black people of South Africa."*

As I read, and re-read those words, I wondered if that is what we are seeing now. We are seeing all those many faces becoming one face.

We must be part of the one face – one global face – that opposes racism.

We must stand with people who are suffering and oppressed and afraid. We must let their face be our face.

Perhaps it is easier these days to see our united face as we wear our COVID masks. Perhaps when we realize how COVID has come to us all, we can begin to name our common humanity.

Years ago, as I stood weeping at the horrific stories told in the Apartheid Museum, a black woman came and put her hand on my shoulder. 'Do not weep at what has been', she said, 'You cannot help the colour of your skin any more than I can help the colour of mine. What we can do now is make sure that these things never happen again.'

To change the world is to live our faith as Gospel people. Today's reading from the very end of the Gospel of Matthew has the last words of Jesus. It is called the great commission.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

For me, there are two parts of that passage to consider today. The first part is that we are called to share the Good News. We are called to baptize and teach everything that Jesus 'commanded'. And what was the commandment of Jesus? That we love one another. That we love as God loves.

Receiving the Great Commission is not a call to use the Gospel as a weapon to oppress, or to claim some sort of superiority. To receive the Great Commission is an invitation to remember who we are from our very beginning. We are beloved children of God.

So our sharing of the Good News, whatever we call it, 'evangelism', 'discipling', 'preaching', whatever – is all about love. It is about respect. It is about listening. It is about justice. It is about welcome.

It is love and respect and listening and justice and welcome that will change everything. That will set us all free. Love and respect and listening and justice and welcome will overcome racism. And that is our calling.

And the second part – is the promise that Christ is always with us. We are not in this alone. We are called to love and respect and listening and justice and welcome. And, we are loved and respected and listened to, and offered justice and welcome. We are held in God's hands and in God's heart.

Our face is the one face of the suffering when we stand together. Our voice is God's voice of hope that change can happen.

Change can happen.

Just when we think that things are at an end, we find a beginning.

Change can happen, hope can live.

As Natalie Sleeth wrote:

*There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody,  
There's a dawn in every darkness bringing hope to you and me.  
From the past will come the future, what it holds, a mystery,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

May God be with us as we work and pray for change for our hurting world.