

Roslyn. The Feast of Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, August 15, 2017.

Grace and peace to you and mercy in the name of Christ, Lord of all and healer of every ill.

No doubt we are facing interesting times in the nation we call home...and I am reminded of the ancient Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times." Yes—today's times are interesting, but let us pray that we do not remember them in years to come as an era of incurable cursedness.

The events of the past several months are rushing at an ever-increasing, breakneck pace toward a head. This past weekend the rioting demonstrations of white supremacist groups, nationalists, and alt-right neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia go to show us just how entrenched the sin of racism is in the culture of the United States. Some say that we have not effectively dealt with our past of slavery and lawful segregation. There is much truth in this observation, but we do ourselves an injustice if we do not recognize the complexity of our current situation and the ways in which our current societal ills not only benefit from past sin, but continue to perpetuate and flourish upon it.

As Christians, we cannot forget that we live with both our feet in two dimensions. We are simultaneously living in the world of secular governments and rulers while at the same time confessing Jesus as Lord of all, ruler of the universe. We long for that day when the Kingdom of God will come in fullness, but we also believe that we live in that reality even now. God's kingdom came near and was made real for us in the incarnation of Jesus, God's own Son, some roughly two thousand years ago. For us Christians, this time of Christ's living among us, his teaching and preaching to us, and his dying and rising for us are the defining feature of all history.

But our world continues to be ravaged by the effects of sin. This is nothing new. Christ's very own coming among us wrought fear among the powerful at the time. In these days of uncertainty and terror, we do well to remember the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, foretelling the slaughter of innocents ordered by King Herod upon learning of the birth of Jesus—"A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." The voice of countless black mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers is heard across this nation as they suffer for the pernicious consequences of institutionalized and personal racism. We must hear their lamentation and bitter weeping. But we cannot only hear. We must listen. We must do.

There are many, many Herods in our world today—our government, our economic system, our education system, our employment market, and even our religious institutions. Sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly we participate in the sin of racism. As a society we must atone for this sin, but as a Church, we must begin with ourselves.

The most fundamental confession of faith a Christian makes is also the oldest confession of the church—"Jesus is Lord." When we make this confession, we are saying that Jesus is our ruler—and no one else. Our allegiance is first and foremost to the Kingdom of God, where Christ sits upon the throne of Heaven, at the right hand of the Father. When we make this confession, we are saying that the Herods

of this world no longer have the last say over us. When we make this confession, we are saying our faith in and allegiance to Christ matters more than our political affiliation, our national heritage, our wealth, our educational achievement, or our job. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.

Our Lord, this one Lord Jesus Christ, commands us to love one another and to seek reconciliation. This is the work of the Christian. Surely we have been loved by God in Christ, and for that reason God entrusts to us the power of the Holy Spirit to transform a world so desperately in need of healing. We are Christ's hands and feet in the world. We who call ourselves the church, the body of Christ—we bear Christ's love and compassion to all people. Part of bearing Christ's love and compassion to the world is most definitely rooted in prayer. We must pray as our Lord taught us. But God has not only given us minds for silent meditation and mouths for spoken prayer, but God has also given us hands and feet to use to love others. First we pray. We listen how God is calling upon us, for God is truly in the midst of suffering. Then we act. We go forward in the way that God is leading us.

We Christians have the holy obligation to recognize things for what they are, to name the evils of this world. In our country today, one of the gravest ills besetting us is the sin of racism. We reel from its consequences, as displayed this past weekend very publically in Charlottesville, Virginia, and daily more covertly in our very own neighborhoods. But we Christians also have the holy freedom to be God's instruments of peace and reconciliation. We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever, freed from the power of sin, death, and the devil to walk in newness of life. Let us live into our freedom to cure the sin of racism in the name of Christ.

Do not fear, for God is with you, do not be afraid, for the Lord is God; God will strengthen you, God will help you, God will uphold you with his victorious right hand.

In the strong name of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Spigelmyer, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

The Rev'd. Daniel W. Spigelmyer, Jr.
Pastor