

2020 ACNA Provincial Address by Abp. Foley Beach



The past few months have not only been pandemic, but pandemonium. We have watched evil displayed by fellow image bearers and some police officers in recent weeks. We have heard cries of grief in our own neighborhoods and from all around the world. And the cries have gotten louder. We watched as peaceful protests were hijacked by chaos and violence, destroying countless businesses and property, and injuring not only bystanders, but also injuring over 800 police officers, some of whom have been killed as well. We still have a long way to go.

In the US we have struggled to overcome the effects of the systemic racism from our founding days, and we know that changing laws would never be enough. Victories for civil rights, and for the desegregation of our schools would never be enough. For you see we don't have just a skin problem, we have a sin problem. As Dr. Tony Evans of Oak Cliff Bible Church in Dallas Texas recently said, "The evangelical church needs to speak up where it has been silent on injustice and racism. The biggest problem in the culture today is the failure of the church. We wouldn't even have a racial crisis in America if the church had not consistently failed to deal with racism as the severe sin it is. But because the church has historically ignored and downplayed it, the issue still exists. Where the church is called to set an example, we have cowered."

We have failed to fully and thoroughly and deeply address the problem of sin in our hearts, homes, churches, and nations. And as the Church of Jesus Christ, now even with the rapidly changing ethnic diversity of North America, we are still reeling from the systemic sins of yesterday. This is not just a black/white issue. Ask our Asian brothers and sisters. Ask our Latino brothers and sisters. Ask our Native American brothers and sisters. Ask those whom the Lord has brought from other nations. The Bible makes it unequivocally clear that we are all made in the image of God. Genesis 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

We each bear the image of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Any hostility between brothers and sisters in Christ, especially because of skin color, is an affront to God and damages our souls and the 'blessed community' so many of us seek. This should upset us! Clearly from Scripture, we see that the goal of humanity is that from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, we will be one big beautiful family (Rev.7). This is what eternity with God and his people will look like and be like. It is not just a nice sentiment but a reality of the Church that is already in existence. Don't we pray in the Lord's Prayer –Thy will be done on earth as it IS IN HEAVEN. There are somewhere around 2.5 Billion men, women, and children in the world today who identify with the person of Jesus. And they come from almost every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. With them we are as the Apostle Paul writes:

no longer strangers and aliens, but ...fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household (Eph.2:19).

While this should be normal for the Church, it is not normal. We still have much work to do in our nations, but even more as the Church -to search our hearts to see if there is any offensive way in us. I know that in the East African Revival of the 1930's the Spirit of God poured out on a white man and a black man. They repented from their sins. They sought God. They prayed and they fasted. And then the Holy Spirit broke out in a mighty way. Our GAFCON movement and the Anglican Church in North America has been profoundly shaped and affected by this revival nearly 90 years running. During this time of revival, I am told what people in the churches and towns noticed were white and black missionaries walking together, preaching together, praying together, and worshiping together. And God the Father poured out a revival of repentance still at work today. It is un-mistakeable -"they will know we are Christians by our love". As Jesus said, "By this all men will know you are my disciples when you love one another (Jn.13:35).

When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (and his father) so fearlessly called us to this kind of love in non-violent acts, people noticed, people responded, and change occurred. This still happens today - people notice, people change, people are converted -by this courageous and self-denying love of God in action. Bishop N.T. Wright wrote about this agape love: "Love affirms the reality of the other person, the other culture, the other way of life; love takes the trouble to get to know the other person or culture, finding out how he, she or it ticks, what makes it special; and finally, love wants the best for that person or culture".

Racism has been practiced from the very beginning. And it isn't finished in our day. And sadly, it won't be finished when you and I are gone. Because in its root, it is a sin problem. We need God to rend our hearts as a Church. We need the people of Anglican Church in North America to display the kind of tenderness and compassion that is needed in this time. We need listening ears. We need thoughtfulness. We need preaching. We need humility. We need grace. We need to aim for the Anglican Church in North America to look like "thy kingdom on earth as it is in heaven".

A few years ago, the College of Bishops was able to hear Dr. Albert Thompson from the Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic speak to us about the history of our Anglican heritage and the failures of racism, the many injustices, and some of the progress we have made over the years. Last year in Plano at our 10th year Anniversary, we heard the Rev. Anthony Thompson from the REC Diocese of the Southeast. His precious wife was shot, along with eight other people, while having a Bible Study at Mother Emmanuel Church in Charleston by a hate-filled man seething with racism. Anthony told us about the power of the Gospel of Jesus and how it has enabled him to forgive the man who murdered his wife. In spite of this evil, we saw in the city of Charleston brothers and sisters like Anthony responding with the love of Jesus and the incredible power of forgiveness.

We need to search our hearts and make sure there is no offensive way in us as the Anglican Church in North America. All the words about spiritual renewal and revival in the Bible are not directed to the non-Christian culture, but to the people of God. We need to look within ourselves. And it starts with me. What the Lord has shown me about me in the past few weeks is this-I have failed to understand the incredible burden and pain that many of my black brothers and sisters live with every day. I have not wept with those who weep. And I have not understood the depth of the effect of racism and injustice. I have not understood the burden of living under racist acts, slurs, and systems they have to endure every day, nor have I understood the fear with which they constantly live for themselves and

their families. It is not enough not to be a racist; we must not be blind to the sin of racism and ignore it in our midst.

Channing Austin Brown writes in *I'm Still Here* about a white student in a college class, who after visiting a museum on lynchings, said this to her fellow classmates: "I don't know what to do with what I've learned," she said. "I can't fix your pain, and I can't take it away, but I can see it. And I can work for the rest of my life to make sure your children don't have to experience the pain of racism." He writes, "And then she said nine words that I've never forgotten: 'Doing nothing is no longer an option for me.'"

Do any of you feel this way? I do. How can I bear another's burden (Gal.6:2) if I don't understand what it is? How can I rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep if I am not in relationship? (Rom. 12:15). I find myself listening a lot these days. I find myself sad a lot. I find myself angry. I find myself yearning to see "all the sad things come untrue." And yet I know that none of this is a surprise to our Lord, and He can be trusted.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I am in no way endorsing those movements that are promoting anarchy, destruction of the family, and the dismantling of our government. Our form of government has brought more freedom, justice, and liberation than ANY other kind of government. However, we cannot ignore the pain of our brothers and sisters. It will not be through political parties, rallies, slogans or marches that our attitudes and practices are changed, that the souls of our nations are converted. They may have some impact, but the deep change we all need will be through revival that comes from repentance—turning away from our sin and toward God and his righteous ways in Jesus Christ.

You can start right where you are. In your own heart, in your own relationship with God -first. Then, in your own community -- One person at a time. One relationship at a time. One act a time. Reaching out and building a relationship with someone different than you are. One drop of rain may not seem like much, but with other drops of rain it can create a healing flood.

Let me tell you about C.J. Pearson. He is a 17-year old black teenager in Atlanta. He decided he wanted to make a difference to help black-owned businesses that had been damaged or destroyed by rioters and looters. He said this: I watched so many videos of America burning each and every night and it broke my heart to see it. But it also broke my heart to see black-owned businesses suffering while people were chanting "black lives matter." So what he did was set a goal to raise \$30,000 to help black businesses that had been hurt. Within a few days, he had raised \$160,000. Here in this picture, he is giving his first check of \$10,000 to help a local business recover. CJ said: "I got to tell you, burning down a Wendy's or any establishment didn't do anything for my black life. So, I wanted to show that conservatives can come together and we can actually help people of color. We are not just saying black lives matter, we're showing they really do indeed matter. We are not just speaking into the atmosphere, but we're backing their words with actions and results."

Seventeen years old!

As a Church we can discuss this issue, and talk and talk and talk. And we will. The academics, the theologians, the bloggers, and even our own Working Group, but as the saying goes: "Talk is cheap." What are we going to DO? What does the Lord want us TO DO? There is someone in your personal world right now that you can begin to build relationship with, get to know, help, and serve in the Name of Jesus. Let's do it. One person at a time.

Several years ago black, white, and Hispanic pastors here in the Atlanta area began a movement for racial reconciliation which we called One Race. We realized that churches can be right down the street from each other and the pastors not only don't know each other, but don't even know each others' names. We determined it was not enough to just know the pastor, but to know each other's families and become not only brothers in Christ, but friends. This led to an event in 2018 when 400 pastors led a walk of thousands of people to climb to the top of Stone Mountain outside of Atlanta. If you know anything about Stone Mountain, it was where the first KKK cross was burned as a symbol of hatred against Jews and Blacks. We climbed to the top, white, black, brown men and women. We sang and we cried and we repented. We lamented over the history that represented the death and destruction of our families, our brothers and sisters in Christ. And we raised a new cross and prayed against the spirits of evil and hatred that were released that day. We asked God to end racism in our city and communities, and bring about spiritual renewal. We saw a picture of every tribe, people and nation. We saw things the way they should be and not how they were. And I must say, what we saw together: one people, one body, one family, one race – all in Jesus Christ -- was nothing short of a miracle. I am praying that is what we will see in and through the Anglican Church in North America. So let us pray for one another about these things, and let us get out and make a difference in our local communities. God has placed you and me here for such a time as this.

It is with deep gratitude and sacred responsibility that Allison and I get to serve you. In these times of fear, pain, heartache, uncertainty, and anxiety, we remember that we are serving a God of goodness and favor toward all of us in Jesus Christ. His amazing grace abounds. His undeserved and unmerited favor is toward all who have come to him in faith. He loves you and me with His unfailing and steadfast love. He has washed our sins as far as east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). As the prophet Isaiah said: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool (Is.1:18). Because of his forgiveness and because of his Holy Spirit, we know that "he works all things out for good to those who love him and called according to His purpose (Rom.8:28). So we do not lose heart. We do not waiver in our faith. We will not be anxious. But let us keep our eyes on Him who is the Lord of lords and the King of Kings, our Lord Jesus Christ! In Him is our HOPE!

The Lord bless you and keep you, make his face shine upon you and grant you his peace. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.