

Good morning,

I have to be honest with you; the last three weeks have been incredibly difficult for me. As you know I live in downtown Philadelphia, and the things that I have seen as I have walked through the city in which I live during the day have left my jaw dropped, the boarded up buildings, the large and heavily armed military and police presence, the thousands of people marching and protesting.

And at night, the things that I see and hear from my living room window have left me shocked and frightened for the safety of others and myself. The sounds of glass shattering, and screaming, the sight and smell of smoke from cars and other structures caught on fire.

And All of this in response to generations of domination, repression, senseless cruelty to black people, to brown people.

And it came to a head with yet another public crucifixion, seen by thousands, if not millions of people. All of what I see with my own two eyes has me asking the same question that Paul asks in our reading from romans, should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? Well, should we? How many generations of people will have to grow up and witness, and participate, and be hurt by these same sins?

We are all created in the image of God. The Holy Spirit lives in each and every one of us. And the world is in pain, it is literally crying out. It's not our institutions our businesses that are crying out it's the god that lives in each one of us that is crying out. It is that God in us that allows us to see and recognize the humanity in one another that is crying out. And it is crying out to say this is wrong, dead wrong.

In genesis, it tells how God created all that is. The sun the moon the stars that fill our skies, the heavens and the earth, the waters, all the animals that roam the land and people. The God that created all that is, created it all in balance. God created the ebb and flow of our seasons, night and day, our relationship to the world around us, our relationship to one another; it is all about balance, balance.

And this balance is what I would like to focus on today. Jesus offers some pretty challenging words to us in our gospel reading today, he says do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother, one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

I wonder, what do you love more than Jesus? What is it in your life that Jesus is trying to separate you from so that you can follow him wholeheartedly? These words from Jesus' make us uncomfortable; he is talking about separating us from the people who are the closest to us our parents, our children. Jesus' words cut straight to the heart. So again I ask you what do you love more than Jesus?

This language here doesn't sound like the Jesus we know and often talk about. I mean we call Jesus the prince of peace; so hearing this from Jesus might make us uncomfortable.

But maybe that's the point; maybe we'd rather be comfortable than follow Jesus.

With my own two eyes I've seen thousands of people in our city out in the streets crying that something is wrong, millions of people around the world crying out something is wrong.

Something is wrong; there is no denying that. Our world is out of balance. The balance that God created, we are seeing individuals crying out and trying to bring balance to our world. We know that this is not going to be solved over night or over the course of a few weeks.

It's not possible. Think about star wars. It took over 40 years for those characters to bring balance to the force and that's in the movies. So why would we expect anything different for the real world. Jesus says in Luke that we have to pick up our cross daily and follow him. Daily. Not just to-day.

Trying to bring God's balance to our world is going to take our whole life. Its going to take more than just my life, more than just your life but its going to take all of our lives.

When Jesus says at the end of our gospel today those who find their life will lose it but those who loose their lives for my sake will find it, he doesn't mean loose your life in the sense of death but rather loose your life, give your whole life over to Jesus, no reservations, let nothing get in the way. Not a sense of comfortability or security, not a sister or a father. Loose your life; give it all over to Jesus, because it is then like Jesus says that you truly will find your life.

Listen when you hear the God that lives in you crying out, don't ignore, turn a blind eye to it. God is calling for you, God is calling for us all and God deserves our whole lives, for our whole life.

Ive had many of conversations with friends of mine all around the world over the last few weeks. People are asking what can they do. Im listening to God, im trying to give my life over to Jesus but how, does that mean go out and march and protest. Does that mean picking up the phone and checking on all the people of color in my life to make sure that they are safe during this time? Does that mean joining my voice in with the many of others calling for real change to our institutions?

And I tell them, start with prayer. Start by talking to God to really see how God is calling you to bring about balance.

Because that is truly what God wants, God wants back the balance that God created in the beginning of time. And after you pray, god might be calling you to do exactly those things that you mentioned.

But yes God might be calling you to something else too. If we are truly talking about balance then we have to be talking about more than one or two things. It is going to take many things to build and rebuild our homes and communities. It is going to take making new relationships, because if we are going to do this right, and really have God at the center of it, then that means we are going to have to do it together.

Much of the public conversation these days is centered on the police, defund the police is the slogan. I have to be honest; I have known a great many police officers. And they are good people, caring people who want to make sure that their communities are safe. I know a great many people who are in the military, I come from a military family, I grew up on bases, my youngest brother is discerning a call to join the military right now.



But I do also know that something happens to individuals as they go through an institutional process. Think about schools and universities, you leave different than you entered. As we look at these institutions and make real change, we also need to encourage individuals who make up these institutions to become more self aware and self-differentiated.

If we are concerned with balance we are not just talking about one thing. We know, even as we are beginning to open back up the corona virus is still with us. We know after several months of watching it that by and large it has disproportionately affected black and brown communities. We know this is mainly because of living conditions. So we need to build so that people can have space to breathe.

We know that when all of our businesses have closed down yes many of them will open again, but we know that many black owned businesses wont, I am personally working to create and support infrastructure to give micro loans so that people have the ability to provide a living for themselves and their families.

If we are called to bring a god-centered balance to this world then we have to be talking about more than one thing. And we have to start from prayer; we have to listen to what God is calling us to do. We have to allow Jesus to separate us from those things that get in the way of what it truly means to pick up our crosses and follow Jesus...

Those who find their life will lose it, but those who loose their lives for my sake will find it. So find your life in Jesus, no matter the cost.

Amen