

Seeing with Compassion

Pentecost 2, Year A

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Matthew 9:35-10:16

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Over the last almost three weeks, we have been witnessing an uprising of the Black Lives Matter movement as people protest what they have been experiencing as systemic racism for too long. After being in the midst of a pandemic, where most of the economy has been shut down, and most black people in the US if they had a job, it was one in the essential areas, so they have not had the opportunity to shelter in place. It is a community that is continuing to experience higher rates of infection and death than the rest of the country. It is a community that often feels harassed and helpless, before the killing of George Floyd by a police officer. This incident ignited the embers that had been burning as Black, Indigenous, and other racialized groups have been suffering from systemic racism for a long time. We hear from the black community that this is 400 years of injustice that has boiled over. As these crowds gather, can we see them with compassion?

When Jesus saw the crowds in Israel, he was filled with compassion for them because he saw how they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He saw their need, the injustice they experienced, their need for healing and hope. He saw that there was not enough people, not enough desire or will, not enough energy to address it. The harvest was plenty but the workers were few. Jesus calls the 12 disciples to send them out with authority to preach the good news, heal the sick, and cast out demons, taking nothing with them, and relying on the hospitality of the community. He sends them out with the authority of love and compassion. We are invited to be like the disciples in our context today and see with compassion.

See with compassion the needs of those suffering during the pandemic. Many of you have seen and are supporting those you know who need groceries and other items as we shelter in place. Many have supported those who are ill or grieving and we continue to hold Carol and Norma in our hearts. Many of us have become aware that the shutdown of the economy has made those who are poor and suffering more vulnerable. We have responded to needs as they have been identified, through lunches and meals for those affected. Some of these were new initiatives, others were variations on what we were already involved with through Indigenous Christian Fellowship. The reality is once we see such a need, such injustice, we can't un-see it. The ministry and mission will likely continue in some way as things change toward a new normal. Indeed, as the school year finishes and

Victoria Campus school winds down the meal program within the school system, some involved will continue to offer support to the families they have come to know.

See with compassion the impact the pandemic has had on the black community, indigenous, and other racialized groups. While the stay at home orders were made and we celebrate and encourage the essential and front-line workers who needed to continue working, how aware are we that many of these workers are from racialized communities and do not have an option to work or stay at home.

[Jonathon Brooks](#), author of Church Forsaken, was on a Parish Collective Facebook [Live conversation](#) about Race and Place this week and talked about this being a white-collar pandemic. All of the people of his church are continuing to work, while it is the privileged white-collar workers who can work at home and shelter in place. It has also been these privileged groups that have protested to get the economy going again. It is the poor and vulnerable who are put more at risk, as well as the health care and emergency workers. Can we see with compassion the impact this has on minority communities?

See with compassion the effect within black community that witnessing Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd's murders, has had on them. See with compassion the effect within the indigenous communities of 5 killings since April 8. These were a series of killings in a long stream of murders of black and indigenous people as a result of systemic racism. The difference with George Floyd's death, from many deaths that have happened as a result of police brutality in the past, is that it was filmed and many in the white community witnessed it. It compounded the police brutality that black, indigenous and other racialized people experience all too often. The injustice experienced through the Pandemic compounded with the pain and anger of seeing more black brothers and sisters killed, exploded. They and now many of in our communities too, are not going to take it any longer. Jesus call to the disciples included to cast out demons, evil, and heal. Exorcism is not something we think about or is part our experience in our time. But is not racism and white supremacy evil? What if it is a demon we are called to exorcise? Are we open to exploring that and understanding what that means for us, for our privilege, for our church? We are invited to talk with those we know who are black, indigenous, or racialized – ask how they are doing and listen. Did you see the post on our Facebook page of Sam's daughters' experience? Did you know that our son was followed by police from Avonhurst and Elphinstone where his new apartment is, to Southland mall, just 2 weeks ago? Jesus sends the disciples out like sheep among wolves, and calls them to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. This will be required of us as we seek to listen, learn, understand and act to address racism in a culture that prefers to think we are not

racist and which tries to keep it hidden. Adele Halliday, Team Leader of Discipleship and Justice with The United Church of Canada wrote an [article](#) *What I Need From White People*, which I commend to you. In it she identifies she needs white people to be pastoral, prophetic, and the churches to pray, preach and protest (and repeat). There is work to do and it is work to be done with love and compassion.

As we review our program year, may we celebrate where we see with compassion and responded to those in need, and nurtured our community. May we continue to see with compassion what it means to love our neighbour as we discern how we live out the mission Jesus calls us to.