

Devotion: June 2, 2020

This was a letter we received this morning from our District Superintendent. I offer it you today, as our devotional.

Am I My Brother's Keeper? - Genesis 4:9

All around our nation, people from all walks of life have been affected by the uncertainty of life, by a pandemic that has forced us into quarantine. It is enough that our livelihood has been strained by a fight against illness and sickness as we daily avoid becoming infected by the Corona virus. For many of us, like myself, it is a real struggle. My heart goes out to all of you who have experienced some kind of loss - loss of a job and income, loss of life from the death of a loved one and the loss of vitality because of this pandemic. Yet, just as we were beginning to climb over this mountain, we witnessed the senseless taking of a life in broad daylight. Not only Ahmad Avery, but most recently, George Lloyd. Somehow the sting of Trayvon Martin's death or Philando Castile's death has faded. But even more relevant, if we have been paying attention, in the city of Rochester every other day, our young people have been shooting and killing each other. Yet, nothing can compare to the way in which George Lloyd lost his life. I will say and acknowledge that maybe the officer did not truly realize what he was doing and there is forgiveness and grace for everyone, especially for our police officers whose job in itself is very dangerous and stressful. However, when someone says, "I can't breathe!"

I ask the question: Am I My Brother's Keeper? Gen. 4:9

These past few days reveals just how frustrated we are. For those who do not proclaim Christ as Lord and Savior, and for our young people who have not had the benefit of knowing the saving grace of Jesus Christ, all they can see is the brutal way in which George Lloyd died. Many people are reacting out of ignorance.

Our young people have been overlooked and victimized because they have not been taught how to handle in a healthy way these kinds of tragic events. They suffer from a lack of parental guidance. Living in poverty with not enough food, not enough adequate housing, with not even a bed to sleep upon and lately not enough education, there is just so much they can handle. For many of these children can not be home schooled by being privileged enough to have a laptop and internet service. Many of them live with Grandma and five other siblings and the resources are just not there. They just don't know how to cope with so much neglect and they use destructive behavior to survive. The use of violence, and in desperation turn to looting and stealing to claim something for themselves, that is all they know. So, what is our response as the Church of Jesus Christ?

A couple of years ago our Bishop Mark Webb with the support of the UNY Cabinet, set into motion a movement, Imagine No Racism. It has now become prophetic. We must dare to address this issue. It now stands as the root cause of what we are witnessing and experiencing today. Somehow we must find ways to come alongside of our families, youth and children living in poverty. If we truly want change, to change the narrative of what is happening in our communities and neighborhoods today, we must become allies. This year at church/charge conferences, when we ask the question: What is your church doing to address Imagine No Racism?, I am praying that your church will step out on faith and build relationships with the least of these by offering some kind of program that will address a need. Ministry projects like an after-school program, a single parenting ministry, activities for young people that will help them

build Godly characteristics and mentoring programs. Let us no longer look past our neighbors, look past our young people who are crying out - will someone help me, will someone pay attention to what is happening to me, will someone teach me how to live in this world? I appeal to you and I charge you to go further than feeding the hungry but walk with a family in need and step out of your comfort zone and take a minute, a moment to listen and then hear their cry. This is my prayer. As we enter the season of Pentecost, let God's Holy Spirit lift you and empower you to a greater level of spirituality and Christianity.

God says, "**Not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit**"! Zech. 4:6

DS Vonda