

GREATER THINGS PART 8 - PAIN AND PROTEST

Scripture used: [Acts 6:1 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

This week, we are asking: Why the pain, protest, and anger? And how can we be faithful Jesus followers through this turmoil? Our text today speaks to the diversity of the early church, just like our own NBCC is incredibly diverse. The text alludes to the “rumbling of discontent” between the Hebraic and Grecian Jews of the early church. In this passage, we find hope for our present challenges.

KEY POINTS

- 1) There is a past history to every present struggle over discrimination. In our text, the Greco-Roman widows are excluded and treated poorly. In America, we contend with a legacy of 300 years of slavery and segregation. Black people were excluded from mainstream transportation, food and lodging, schools, etc. There were frequent lynchings. The message was that those who are black are inferior and expendable. Today, we continue to have pronounced discrimination in banking, medical care, and law enforcement.
- 2) Just as in our text, the oppressed are tired of empty promises and greet the bad news with: “Here we go again.” Many in the black community continually hope that “today might be the day when the color of my skin is not a liability in America.” There has surely been progress: black Fortune 100 CEOs, the Obamas in the White House. But then you hear the names of innocent black people killed by police with apparent impunity. And there is tiredness and frustration and outrage against the culture that permits and licenses it. The striking facts of the George Floyd video are how cavalier Officer Derek Chauvin acts in the 8 ½ minutes he is kneeling on the neck of George Floyd and the inaction of the three other officers quietly standing by. 40 million black people in the US viscerally felt this experience of institutional racism. They all said, “I Can’t Breathe.” This came on top of the viral video of the white woman in New York City’s Central Park who threatened a black bird-watcher by calling the police, weaponizing an intrinsic assumption that the police could be counted on to support her if she claimed a threat by a black man.
- 3) We will be unable to move forward as a community or as a nation unless we are open to hearing the stories that are embedded in the lives around us. Pastor Hurmon shared a portion of his everyday story of living in a very nice neighborhood of Silicon Valley that he loves to walk. Yet he knows better than to walk after dark. His wife and daughter are worried about his safety when he walks because of the common black experience of “fitting the description” of someone who is deemed to be suspicious. The fear and anxiety of harm coming from racial prejudice is a part of the burden their family carries on a daily basis.
- 4) People are marching again with their eyes on the prize. Violence comes from anger, hopelessness, or those with distorted agendas at odds with the great majority protesting for the sake of justice. Violence is wrong as it destroys innocent people and communities. In [John 11](#), Jesus called out to Lazarus and Lazarus rose, and a seemingly permanent reality (injustice, death) was overcome with the power of God. Similarly, in [Acts 6](#), the early Christians were empowered by God’s Spirit to come together and reverse injustice. Like them, we have to listen to each other; lament with each other; lift each other up; and act together to enact decisive and positive change.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - How are you feeling? How did this Sunday’s message make you feel? Work hard to give every person in your group a safe space to share honestly. Really listen deeply to each other, hearing each other’s stories and the life histories and experiences that cause us to feel a certain way now.
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Lament together as Jesus lamented with Mary in John 11:35. If you have a hard time lamenting with empathy, try hard to put yourself in the shoes of those who are sharing their story. If you had lived what they have lived, can you see how what they feel makes sense? Work hard to understand the perspectives of others in your group. Allow the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of your life story to create the potential for changing hearts and minds; let go of the need to convince others that they must share your perspective. If there is clear disagreement, entrust it and release it to God.
- 3) **DO** - Go deeper in sharing your story and praying together (listen/lament/lift up/act together) with those in your Life Group or others. Ask God for a way to make a difference in your sphere of influence. Invite others to NBCC’s Online Worship Gathering this coming Sunday, as we complete Part 2 of this message.