

“The Journey of One Race and One Blood Isn’t Easy”

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

Psalm 48

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Mark 6:1-13

We celebrate our 245th anniversary of independence as a country today. 1776 was an important year. And then eleven years later, in 1787, our government’s system of democracy was established. As a country, we value the idealism of the Declaration of Independence and the pragmatism of the Constitution. Democracy is a modern idea that is transformative. A democratic form of government is freeing and challenging...distributive and collective. Louis Menand writes, “It is a remarkable fact about the United States that it fought a civil war without undergoing a change in its form of government. The Constitution was not abandoned during the American Civil War; elections were not suspended; there was no coup d’état. The war was fought to preserve the system of government that had been established at the nation’s founding—to prove, in fact, that the system was worth preserving, that the idea of democracy had not failed.”¹ And now, our country is once again caught in a struggle of what democracy is and is not.

Christians have a parallel journey to that of our country’s journey on what democracy is and isn’t. We are on an ongoing conversion from a life which was lost without Jesus to one which is more and more informed by the way Jesus words and deeds which encourages our words and deeds to be more like his. In all aspects of life we must

¹Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* New York, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), ix.

take measured steps of making the necessary changes in character and attitude to be fully functioning human beings. Jesus is all about the journey.

Jesus had returned to his home town. He taught in the synagogues and the people were shocked. Notice the words of Mark 6:1, 3 “On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished.... ‘Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters with us?’ Leaders who speak truth with conviction aren’t received in their home towns. Leaders who commit to a journey of building life for all people, as intended by God, that all humans are created in the image of God and deserve the same rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as the Constitution asserts, face criticism and scrutiny. Crawford W. Loritts Jr., the father of Bryan Loritts, writes, “We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the handful of words and actions of the bad people but the appalling silence of the good people.”² In the citation just read, it is clear that the cry then was for some holy impatience. The same is true today.

Patience is a virtue, and it is important in our journey of conversion. But, and this is a vulnerable, yet authentic but, silence is a form of unholy patience, and when Christians are silent, the journey of Christian discipleship presses pause. The statement by Jesus that he is the way, the truth and the life is paused in the silence. And so it is for the teachings of the Greatest Commandment, the Sermon on the Mount and Matthew 25. Yet the journey is not to be pressed on pause. We are called to press play. 2 Samuel 5:1 reads, “Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, “Look, we are your bone

²Bryan Loritts, ed., *Letters To A Birmingham Jail: A Response To The Words And Dreams Of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2014), 76.

and flesh.” Psalm 48:12-14 reads, “Walk about Zion, go all around it, count its towers, consider well its ramparts; go through its citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will be our guide forever. Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.” 2 Corinthians 12:10 reads, “Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.” The journey is a passionate defense of equality and equity full of pathos and gospel truth. We are one race and one blood. Our voice is to be heard through holy impatience.

In Mark 6:1-13 along with Jesus, we acknowledge that being at odds with others on non-essentials is normal. However a most significant part of the journey is to rally around our unity on the essentials. The authority of Jesus was challenged because it expressed itself in powerlessness, dependency and relationships. Jesus did not place limitations on those who could accomplish God’s purposes. The marginalized and disenfranchised embraced Jesus, but those who held power and position rejected him. Mark 6:3-4 reads, “...And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.’” Jesus’ way of speaking and doing his ministry was difficult to embrace because it did not align with conventional expectations or values. Jesus was not silent. Jesus demonstrated, in word and deed, holy impatience.³

³In the two paragraphs of textual analysis above, I have benefited from the thinking of Mark McEntire, Wyndy Corbin Reuschling, Anna George Traynham, Zaida Maldonado Perez, William Yoo, Matthew L. Skinner and Richard W. Voelz in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume 3* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 127-129, 129-131, 132-134, 135-137, 137-139, 140-142 and 142-143.

The freedoms we have in our country should bring us together to accomplish a common vision that is inclusive, not exclusive. Crawford W. Loritts Jr., the father of Bryan Loritts, writes, “Until we come to the place where we see ethnic diversity as more than a strategy, emphasis, or an occasional feature in our e-magazines, we will always be playing catch-up.”⁴ The integrity of the gospel demands that the visible transformation Christ provides be demonstrated and modeled by the unity of the one Body of Christ.⁵ The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are loud voices and rightly so!

Exercise holy impatience in the journey of being one race and one blood. Claim the integrity of the gospel in your life. Demonstrate and model the unity of the Body of Christ in your words and actions. There is one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. Do not remain silent. Amen.

*This sermon was preached (In-Person with COVID-19 protocols and Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Sunday, 4 July 2021
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⁴Bryan Loritts, ed., *Letters To A Birmingham Jail: A Response To The Words And Dreams Of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 85.

⁵Some ideas in this paragraph adapted from Bryan Loritts, ed., *Letters To A Birmingham Jail: A Response To The Words And Dreams Of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 74-92.