

Jesus said “So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.” These words from today’s gospel kept coming back to me this week as I read the gospel over and over. It is a dense gospel – some say that the gospel writer created a compilation of Jesus’ sayings. There is much for a reader to digest.

In all those words of Jesus, these are the ones that stood out to me “Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.” Perhaps it is because in these past months so much has been uncovered. Covid-19 brought out the disparities for black and brown people when it comes to healthcare, types of jobs and economic status. The video of George Floyd’s death has shown us the depth of the racism that pervades our country. And it keeps coming. More and more is uncovered. More videos. More stories. Thousands upon thousands have taken to the streets to demand justice and an end to racism. What was in the dark is being brought to light and what was whispered is being proclaimed from the housetops.

What is amazing to me is that even after weeks of protests and discussion online and in tv about the problem of racism, we still see and hear of racist incidents happening. I want to say – People your behaviors are being seen. It is being recorded. Stop. Stop and change. Stop and listen. Stop and understand. This is not OK.

Last week, I saw a post¹ about a Filipino man in San Francisco, CA who was accosted by a white woman because he was stenciling “Black Lives Matter” in chalk on the front of his house. She wasn’t upset about what he was writing but rather that he was defacing the property. She told him she was going to call the cops because he was breaking the law. He started to video record. He told her he lived there and she said he couldn’t possibly, because she knew who lived there.

Never mind that he was neatly stenciling the words in chalk – who does that if they are defacing property? I was glad to hear that she later apologized when she found out he did live there (and had lived there for 18 years), but it made me pause. How much more uncovering is needed before we as a country start to get that we live in a country where black and brown people continually face big and small acts of racism? On top of that, the uncovering is just the first step. The uncovering itself is hard work. It is painful, hurts our hearts, challenges us and holds up a mirror, but next steps are needed.

¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/filipino-american-confronted-blm-message-sheds-light-form-genteel-racism-n1231409>

And here is where I really get worried, because some of us will be tempted to stop and cover it all up again. We may be tempted to say - let's just pause and take a break. We've been through so much and we are still in the middle of a pandemic. Do we have to talk about this now?

For me the answer to do we need to talk about this now is yes. It is yes because this is the work Jesus calls us to. This is the work Jesus did. Jesus taught us to care for one another. Jesus asks us to stand up for one another. Jesus asked us to love one another. Jesus says for us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and our Baptismal Covenant ties this love of neighbor to justice. We are to strive for justice and respect the dignity of every human being. That's the love Jesus requires of us, and the love that holds us accountable to speak up and stand up when our neighbor is victimized, ostracized, discriminated against, and even senselessly killed for the color of his/her skin."

Jesus knew how hard this work would be. In fact, from the way he is talking to the disciples, I think he is asking them to do similar work to ours today. Jesus is shoring the disciples up. Right before he talks about uncovering, he says do not be afraid and right afterwards, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Jesus knows how scary this work will be and what it will unleash. It is probably why he says later in the gospel - "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."

I am so grateful to the commentator ² who pointed out that Jesus when Jesus speaks about division, he is not telling us that we are to divide for the sake of dividing. Jesus is telling us what will happen when we strive for that true peace - not the fake peace of denial, dishonesty, and harmful accommodation but rather the holistic, truth-telling, disinfecting peace. Hear that again my friends – **"not the fake peace of denial, dishonesty, and harmful accommodation but rather the holistic, truth-telling, disinfecting peace."** That is the peace that comes when we do the hard work of loving one another on this planet.

Where do we go from here as we stand in the middle of this messy and scary work that needs to be done to combat and end racism? We go forward. It will be slow and messy and tense. It will require much listening. A few days ago, I was chatting with my neighbor. He was talking about his basketball team back in the day in Amboy. He said there was no difference between black and white. We treated each other the same. What a blessing that story is! I give thanks for such stories. However, I asked my neighbor, if he had ever talked to his black teammates about how they were treated other places. He said no. Why would he? He had no reason to ask them that. I wonder what would they would have said then and what they would have said now.

² <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2668-what-to-fear>

A few weeks ago, I asked you to listen to one another a few weeks ago. Keep at it. Listen to your white friends and listen to your black friends, your brown friends. Dig deep for that patience especially when you disagree with someone. Pray for that patience because we are all in different places on this journey. Trust that God is with us working with us and trust that God is with them. Be open and see what you can do. God needs us to do this work. Stay the course. Persist.

And when you feel tempted to put the covers down again, and dim the lights, remember what Jesus calls us to – proclamation of God's love in the light so that those who are unseen, ignored, and discriminated against will be loved and treated with dignity and respect."