Want Offer a couple thoughts/ reflections as we start the morning.

Pray.

The past 2 weeks have been mind-boggling.

**This is just a hard place/ hard situation.**

What’s making this **hard situation** even **harder**?

Want to reflect and **think out loud** with you for a few minutes.

**1. It’s hard bc we’re a polarized nation.**

**BUT now it’s just bizarre.**

Everyone agrees that the death of George Floyd was a murder, and it was a gross injustice.

After that, everything becomes a talking point for one side or the other.

What’s weird is what happens in our hearts.

Jer 29:11 – “The heart is deceived above all things. Who can understand it?”

We want the **officer** to turn out to be the worst possible white supremacist.

We want that to be true bc that’s an answer.

Or, we hope **George Floyd** was on drugs, a dealer, or even a rapist and had a long, dangerous police record.

Or, we want to show that the **real people** doing all the **bad stuff** are the **anti-fascists** or it’s the white **supremacists** groups.

But- there are **genuinely angry people** over what happened.

We want **reform** and real **justice**,

not even sure what that means.

It’s feels like **they’re right**, **they’re winning**…

we’re **wrong** at every turn, and

everything **we do**. So polarizing…

Its feels like we’re wearing **jerseys**.

Want a ref to throw a yellow flag, “timeout…”

**2. It’s hard bc of Corona lockdown.**

I guess we’ll see in a couple weeks if this whole lockdown was necessary.

Either the protest crowds are **super spreaders**, or

we didn’t really need locked down in our homes.

But lockdown is a factor.

Lots of **stress**…. **economic** **uncertainty**.

Couldn’t go anywhere, do anything.

Now its **nice out now** and you’ve been **pent up**.

We miss **people**, we miss **being together** –

easy to be testy and on edge.

The Lockdown has made it hard.

**3. It’s hard bc we have little personal experience or history on racism.**

This is true any time you talk about race.

I Posted FB –“ I don’t know a lot…”

Don’t know **language** of it.

I would fail a test on **history** of racism.

Don’t really have **context** or **experience** for it in Smithsburg for past 53 years….

I want to **listen**, and I want to **understand**, and I want to **learn**…

and **act** **appropriately** based on what I hear and understand.

I want to **make sense** of what’s going on.

I want to **lead** **responsibly** and **biblically**.

Studying, reading watching a lot now…..

We’re trying to interpret information about these events

with little **personal** **experience** and **history**.

So there’s a very **personal side** to it –

Should I be doing something?

“Silence is agreeing with injustice~!”

What **should I do**? What **can I do**?

Almost like a **misplaced guilt**.

PC Classmate Kirk Alexander – 2 great lies we’re hearing:

If you **white**, born an **oppressor**.

If your **black**, born **inferior**.

-> Both came from same corner in hell.

Truth is:

All are born in image of God. Period.

It’s never just an intellectual discussion about facts,

yet it’s hard bc there’s this **personal side** of this for each of us…

and how to process what’s happening.

**4. Its hard bc we don’t know what to information to believe.**

We live in a day of an endless stream of **information**.

Mixed in that may be

**intentional** **misinformation**.

Things are **happening** so **quickly**

it makes it hard to know what is what.

It’s people from Minneapolis reacting.

NO! it’s organized protestors from out of state!

Then spread almost overnight to 39 cities.

Then multiple countries.

What really is the truth?

We’re now being led to believe **mainstream America** doesn’t want **police**.

Or, its ok for an **armed citizen militia** to form a province within a city (Chaz in Seattle).

Really?

There’s SO MUCH information that we just don’t know what to believe.

It makes it hard, bc we want the truth.

**5. It’s hard because there are scary times.**

People are scared in so many of our cities.

And it’s scary to think what’s going to happen.

When will this calm down?

Will the big cities be havens of unrest?

Are the organized protesters coming to rural America next?

Will crime and destructive protest run rampant and there’s no police?

**Civilized** **life** with **institutions** like

law enforcement are a

**gift from God** – Romans 13.

It’s something that has to be **worked for** and **defended** and **preserved**.

Just like unity in the body we talked about 2 weeks ago.

We’ve seen it only takes a **small handful of people**, and

**leaders** who are not up to the challenge,

to have it **unravel quickly.**

So yes - these are **scary times**.

People are angry, and rightfully so.

And they are frightened.

We see it all.

We have instant communication with everyone.

Makes it hard bc these are scary times.

**6. It hard bc we’re really not sure what our history is in this country.**

US history filled w high spots and low spots.

There are **great** **accomplishments**, and there are **great** **injustices**.

We hear 2 narratives:

1. Our history is basically 300 years of systemic oppression

with **white** people having all of the **benefits**, and

**black** people being systematically **oppressed** and

treated **inhumanely** such that

the founding statements of this country that

“ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL”

was just a covering for slavery and oppression.

Is that our story?

There are certainly good things, and we’re thankful for our country,

but to tell the story of our country this way

is to essentially to tell the story

through the **lens** of

**systemic** **racism**, and

every white person **has been** and

**should be** held accountable for it.

The other narrative is:

2. America is the land of the free,

the home of the brave,

the place of hope and opportunity, worship-

yet- with many blind spots, warts, and bad actors, some very grievous ones,

and oftentimes, we have not lived up to our own ideals and

the things written down in

our own founding documents?

Which narrative is it?

Inside we’re screaming-

“Look- I’m proud to be an American.”

And on the whole

we believe the country has been

an **exceptional country** and

one that has been **used** for **good** in the world.

Hearing both things with knowing is hard.

A lot of people will say that

**both** of those **things are true**,

and **both** support their **arguments**.

Yes, we all understand there’s **good** and **bad** in the country.

Yet at the heart of this elevated, emotional

**national** **disagreement**

is a different understanding of

**what** the history of our country is, and

**what** has brought us to this point.

We can agree on the death of George Floyd;

it was **wrong** and an horrible **injustice**.

But the broader story of what’s going on

is one that

**we’re not sure about** and

**we certainly don’t agree on**.

Let’s pause and remind ourselves about with truth from scripture.

Let’s **put God’s voice back** into the conversation.

Many Psalms ask 4 questions

1. What happened?
2. What’s it feel like?
3. Who is God?
4. What does faith in him look like when it seems the mountains are falling into the sea?

Read **Psalm 46.**

**God is- present (reliable), with us, fortress**

**Contrast – mtns falling/not moved**

**Song- it’s a worship**

**He speaks things happen: He is still in control.**

He is present, he is powerful and His kingdom still rules.

Let’s pray as we

go into worship,

calm our hearts,

proclaim his justice and righteousness over the nations.

After message- talk a bit about what we can do as Christians.

PRAY.

**What We Can Do/ Application What is the work we’re to do?**

**1. Recognize we’re in an intense emotional time and be careful of conclusions you draw.**

**God says there are 2 sides to every issue Proverbs 18:17**

It’s so easy to take the

worst of the stories and

the worst injustices and

the worst incidences and

the worst sorts of people and figure, well,

this is what America is going to be like.

Buy more food and ammo.

But if we don’t cross examine this-

We’re not going to hear about the

thousands of people from all over Minneapolis and other cities-

who got up the next morning,

from **churches,** and probably from **synagogues** and

from all **walks of life**, and

started cleaning up their streets.

We’re not going to know their names.

There won’t be YouTube clips

of clearing burned out buildings.

So what is the real America?

Don’t draw hasty conclusions in

this emotional time from

the worst pictures and

the worst stories streaming on our phones.

God says there is always 2 sides to a story line.

And God remains sovereign over all.

**2. As a Christian, what can you do?**

**a.) Grieve with compassion with those who grieve.**

Pray for the Floyd family regularly. Ask God to comfort them, meet them

**b.) Look at our own hearts with humility.**

I’ve posted there’s a **language, history** and **context** of racism I am simply ignorant of.

It has not been a part of life growing up in rural Smithsburg for 53 years.

But it doesn’t mean I’m innocent.

Cindy and have had some great talks about where does it show up in our thoughts, attitudes and even actions.

We asked- where might we have bias, prejudices, thoughts and attitudes, unjustified fears, cultural presuppositions…?

How do they come out?

We found some, and did not like it.

Was very subtle, but wrong.

Encourage you do the same. If you find it-

Confess it.

Repent of it.

Receive forgiveness in the gospel.

Work at new fruit born of the Spirit-

EVERY person is made in the image of God.

**c.) Pray.**

Pray is a means of God to work.

Do not believe the lie that prayer isn’t doing something.

Prayer is wrestling against not just the flesh and blood

but against the **principalities** and **powers** of darkness.

Prayer is talking to God – creator of heaven and earth – who

cares about **us** and

cares about **his creation** and

care about those **made in his image** and, yes,

cares about the United States of **America**.

And so **our work** is to **pray**, and

pray in Jesus name,

believing that God will listen, and answer.

And pray for humility that leads to grace.

“Lord, show me **my sin**.

What have I missed?

Expose the **dark** **places** of my heart.

Would you give me humility towards others?”

Lastly, what does bible call us to do?

**d.) Simply put- Put on Love. 1 Cor 13**

**Love God** and **love your neighbor** as yourself is our charge.

And we know as Christians,

we know the definition of love.

And it’s not unconditional affirmation.

It’s not just warm mushy feelings.

Love means you’re **patient** and you’re **kind**.

You **do** **not** **envy** others.

You don’t want to take away blessings that they have.

You don’t boast like the blessings you have are because you deserved them.

You’re not arrogant.

You’re not rude toward other people.

You don’t insist on your own way.

You want to listen.

You want to learn.

You want to understand.

You come with a posture of humility.

You draw out and don’t call out.

You’re not irritable.

You’re not resentful.

You don’t rejoice at wrongdoing.

You’re not looking for the **other side to screw up** because then it makes our side look better.

And you **don’t** want to **rejoice with wrongdoing** because that’s a point for our side.

But you rejoice with the truth of the gospel.

Love bears all things,

believes all things,

hopes all things,

endures all things.

Love never ends.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three.

But the greatest of these is love.

And we know love because the Lord Jesus loved us first and

gave his life for us,

when we deserved God’s wrath,

when we deserved to be treated as criminals;

we were deserving of judgement but received grace-

we didn’t earn it nor deserve it.

Because of his great love with which he loved us,

while we were yet sinners,

Christ loved us and he gave up his life for us.

And so, we who have been loved,

surely ought to love one another.

How do we work our ousalvation in this context?

Let us love like Christ.