

Trusting the Changing Power of Grace

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
—Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness, Lutheran Book of Worship.

These are tender and emotional days in our country, dear ones. Following the tragic death of George Floyd, a beloved child of God, we have seen hurt, anger, tears, pain, and exhaustion unfold before us as a nation. We have seen hope in peaceful protests shared by police, public leaders, and community members who have joined together in lamenting the tragic impact of the sinfulness of racism in our country, and in repenting together as we hope for and work toward a country that is more just. We have also seen brokenness re-emerge in the midst of this hope on all levels: through police brutality, through divisive rhetoric, and through looting and a lack of order and safety in the streets, both for protesters exercising their civic duty and for ordinary people.

As Lutherans, we have a rich theological tradition to cling to as we come to grow in our understanding of this moment in our communal life. We believe that there is no such thing as “good people” and “bad people”, but rather that we are all desperately broken by the powers of sin and death. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and we are all bound together in that reality. This means that when we come to conversations of racism and other forms of sinfulness in our world, we are called to do so honestly—not pointing blame away from ourselves, but rather repenting our own participation in those things that have harmed some brothers and sisters in Christ more than others, despite our common identity as children of God.

That is not all—as Lutherans, we believe in the deep and abiding power of God’s grace in our lives. In spite of our brokenness, God loves us dearly and unendingly. We can move into these difficult conversations with hope because we know that it is by confessing and repenting that God is able to set us free and institute new life. Telling the truth about sin and its impact can feel really hard—can feel like death—but we have faith in a God who has defeated death and has spurred resurrection. I invite our congregation into a season of discernment, by asking us to ponder these questions: How has our experience shaped how we react to these forces of sin? How have we turned away from the pain of our neighbors because we didn't share in it? How might we practice being uncomfortable to confront this sinfulness that God wants us to root out of our lives and our world? The Holy Spirit is with us in these days and has the power to save us from ourselves. May God bless our repentance, our learning, our listening, and our hoping.

Pastor Marissa