

## THOUGHTS ON RECENT EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

For the last 10 days or so, many of my thoughts and prayers have been about the terrible events in the US, as perhaps they have been occupying yours too. I was shocked and angered at the unnecessary death of an already handcuffed man by a knee in the neck from what can only be described as a brutal and thuggish police officer. I speak, of course, of the murder, in Minneapolis, of George Floyd, who was black. Even if Mr Floyd was guilty of his alleged crime, it is not for the police to decide, or administer any punishment, let alone death. And the thing that astonished me, was that a member of public got it all on their phone, thereby incriminating the policeman and his colleagues, who must have been aware of that possibility.

Quite rightly there has been an outpouring of grief and anger across racial and national boundaries. Protest and lament are ways of dealing with this, and countless other crimes against black or other ethnic groups of people.

Why so much anger at one death? Because it isn't just "one death", this is the latest in a long and shameful history of racism, in the US, but also here in the UK, and elsewhere. Sadly there's probably no place in the world where this pernicious evil is entirely absent. The out pouring of anger is from years of pent up pain and grief at not being listened to, and this latest abuse of power, was the catalyst. While I don't condone the torching and destruction of property or looting, it is all too easy to see how anger translates into it, leaving aside an element of opportunism. For years, the voices of the voiceless have been ignored by the powers that be.

And of course the situation has not been helped by the hate filled rantings of the current occupant of the White House, who last week had the temerity to demand that a street near his local Episcopal church be cleared of peaceful protesters by the use of teargas and threatening over armed police, so the HE could have a cheap photo op brandishing a Bible in front of the church.

Of course there have been cries of outrage about this from many people, including, but not exclusively Christians, not only in the States but elsewhere. To me, this is a disgusting misuse of the Word of God. I don't use the word lightly, but it is blasphemy too.

Perhaps Mr Trump could take a closer look at what is actually IN this book, a Book that can be horribly misused, or brings hope and joy to countless people of all races and nations. The Old Testament Prophets might be a good place to start as there is an overarching theme of the need for mercy, justice and integrity especially from those who wield power (Isaiah 10 for example). Then perhaps he could look at St Luke's Gospel to get a little insight into Jesus' attitude to foreigners. Could a racist sincerely tell the story of the Good Samaritan? (10: 25- 37) I think not. Of course there are many other passages I could pick out, but space doesn't permit, so my last allusion is to Genesis 1:27 "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them" (With a parallelism for emphasis, note).

In my reading of the Book that means EVERYONE regardless.....no ifs, no buts. And we too must look deep into our hearts and minds, as well as critically at our politicians and leaders to ensure we root out this evil, because if we say nothing we are complicit.

May our God of mercy, justice and love rule in our hearts and nations. Alice