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## INJUSTICE

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In the last weeks, we've heard of Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, All Lives Matter. And it seems as if we're tossing various insults across the borders. Maybe you get this feeling of being overwhelmed by it all. I don't know what to do, there's just too much. Where can you help people find hope? Where can you find hope?

It's been an interesting time for me as an American living in Australia to have half of my heart be focused on what's happening all the way across the world, which has crossed the ocean to be here in Australia. A sense of injustice, a sense of inequality, has really wrecked my own sense of reality. And to understand that, in my case, in thinking of America, there's an uncivil war seeming to happen before our eyes.

In the last weeks we've heard of Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, All Lives Matter. And it seems as if we're tossing various insults across the borders, trying to understand what is important in life. And we've got this maelstrom or whirlpool of negativity, and anger, and selfishness, and basically most of the seven deadly sins in the cesspool around our feet. Why did this happen? How did this happen? And why now?

A few weeks ago, I had a chance to connect with my sister. She's from Minneapolis. Of course, most people before George Floyd's death, couldn't find Minneapolis on a map, even if you're from the United States. But now the world seems to have heard about Minneapolis because of George Floyd's death, but also the ensuing riots.

My sister is an emergency room nurse in Minneapolis. And Minneapolis has been suffering from COVID deaths, COVID issues. And she said it's been very difficult for her to actually, in the midst of the riots, change from her COVID outfit or COVID mask. All of the difficulties from that and switch to take care of people who have been injured in riots. And in one of the ways that she spoke to me, she said, "It just feels unfair. Can 2020 please be over."

I think the struggle that I hear listening to my sister is that, the unfairness of having to deal with a sickness that was never intended, not man-made, not human-made, the physical sickness, to take off her mask and go take care of a different kind of sickness, almost a spiritual sickness that's infected society for many, many decades, many centuries. And what does it mean for her, and what does it mean for us to deal with this kind of sickness in the 21st century?

Have you ever felt as if there's, at some point, or someone or something in your life, this unseen force that's holding you back from something? Or you felt like someone was making something in your life difficult. We see it sometimes in the workplace, may be in the culture, in the community. People feel like they're passed over. People feel like someone's getting something better than I am because of some kind of unseen rules that you don't know about or that I don't know about.

And sometimes, I think these unseen rules are even more apparent for kids. Like on the playground. The other day I was outside with a group of kids, there were about 10 of us. And we were playing four square.

And I, growing up in the United States, we'd never played four square before. I'd never seen it. And so this game has this ball and there's lots of rules that I have no idea. If it bounces once or twice... I don't know. There's a whole bunch of stuff.

Anyway, I was thinking I could play this game as a 47-year-old, just like a 10-year-old, like all of these kids. And so I entered the fray with this sense of excitement or happiness. The game was robust. All the kids are shouting, there's joy, there's arguments, there's frustrations and disagreements about interpretation of rules as always for games.

But I could see that there was this one young boy in the back. He was the biggest boy, and everyone literally looked up to him. And it was his position to be kind of the leader of the game, this hierarchy. He's like the president. I don't know if that's the name of the space at the top. I think it was ace or president or something like that. But this young man would give his personal interpretation of all the balls put into play.

So when it came to be my turn, the self-appointed leader of the game, who had just been dismissed from the square because of this masterful shot by this other, I think it was a young girl, I was just about to occupy the spot to get in the game, and all of a sudden, he, he says, "No, no, it's not your turn. I get to take that spot even though I lost." Because of some magic formula that he said out loud before, who knows. I didn't know what the rule was.

Anyway, I'm still left off to the side. And my 47-year-old self feels this sense of injustice. Like, Why don't I get a play? This is 10-year-olds and a 47-year-old. This is dumb. But I feel that sense of little boy injustice. This isn't fair. It isn't fair because I didn't know the rules. And then I get frustrated. And I suppose, if I reverted back to my little boy's sense, continued going there, I would have stomped off. You get that pouty lip, "I don't want to play anymore!" Or if I'm honest with myself, I probably would have tried to steal the ball and just walk away. Pick up your bat and leave. And then no one gets to play the game.

When George Floyd was killed, these unwritten rules, all of these things that nobody had known really, or paid attention to, they seem to be flashed everywhere. They seem to be shown across the internet, perhaps Facebook, perhaps social media everywhere. The barriers that separate people who've been oppressed from living an equitable life are exposed to many people who would never even thought about it really before. And the ensuing riots were simply a way to stop the game. To pick up the ball and make sure that nobody else could play to.

Now, not everything that occurred afterwards was about justice. Some of it's just plain old human selfishness. Like the looting and the destruction of property. But truly, we're talking about injustice and what this means.

So as you and I experienced what's happening in this world, maybe you get the same sense, this feeling of being overwhelmed by it all. Like, I don't know what to do, there's just too much. Maybe you want to do something, but it feels like, what is it that can be done? Where can you help people find hope? Where can you find hope?

It's been interesting to watch my Facebook Feed during this time, to watch people from my hometown, my parents included, who have been frustrated by what's happened, the riots, the protests, peaceful or otherwise. And the way that it's so dissimilar to what happened 40 years ago. At the end of the Vietnam War, this little town, not only my parents, but the entire community took in a family from Vietnam. They who were once considered the enemy, was now being brought into their small village.

They housed them. They gave them furniture. They gave them food. I can still remember it. And this was an eye-opening moment for me to understand the way humanity can operate, can live together. And for me, that's a reflection of the way God made us, created us, to be. To bring in people from different perspectives, different cultures. And to say, you're valuable because we see God in you. But we switched back and forth so easily sometimes, on different topics, different ideas.

So here where we're 40 years later. How is it that this happens? Where is the hope of 40 years ago? As a pastor of the Christian faith, I'm constantly reminded that God speaks time and time again about people who have been disenfranchised and striving for justice. We hear it. Show us favor, God, show us favor for we've had more than enough contempt. We've had more than enough scorn from the arrogant, and contempt for the proud.

Perhaps, some of you who are listening are thinking, "That's me. I've had enough contempt. I've had enough scorn. I've had enough contempt from the proud." You might be thinking to yourself, at that point, "I need someone to help me." Maybe this is the point where we experienced the difference between sympathy and empathy.

I mean, think about it this way. If you have a friend who is walking along the sidewalk, trips over, falls, scrapes their knee, hits their head, or whatever it is. And you come along them, you see this. And sympathy would say, I feel sorry that this has happened to you. I feel bad that this happened to you. But empathy is totally different because empathy moves past sympathy, to actively move to help. So not only that I feel bad, but I actually care so much about you. And what's happened to you that I have to help.

So in the same way, it's kind of like this. So God sees when people have fallen. All throughout the ages, people have fallen. It's not just they've scratched their knees or scratch their faces, but literally, they've scratched their souls. We've been separated from God in this way. God could just stand at a distance and say, "I feel bad for you. I feel sympathy for you that you've got yourself into this predicament."

But God loved us so much, he cared so much for us, that he moved past sympathy and sent his son to empathize to be with us. Because he cared so much for us that he couldn't help but help. And so now we have this amazing promise in Jesus. That in the midst of any of this difficulty, in any of this, we know that God is with us in the midst. And so we can be with Him there.

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