

Pentecost, May 31, 2020  
Acts 2:1-21, John 7:37-39  
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“And just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:10-11)

“I don't think black people have ever **not** noticed birds, really,” said J. Drew Lanham. “Birds are allegories for freedom. Birds do things black people can't.”

Quoted by Emily Atkin in an article for *Heated* entitled, “As rare as hen's teeth.”

The lifelong birder was audibly exhausted when we spoke on Tuesday. For a person who usually spends most days “somewhere out in the wild beyond,” as his voicemail politely notes, Lanham had spent a considerable amount of time on the phone and the internet, talking about the same thing everyone else was talking about: a black man experiencing racism while birding.”

This time it was Christian Cooper in Central Park in New York City.

“When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” (Acts 2:1-4)

“I can't breathe”

Lonnae O'Neal, senior writer for *The Undeclared*, reports,

“Floyd lies immobilized, groaning on the pavement as cars rush by, police radios beep and bystanders gather...

“Please, man!” Floyd begs as he is ground into the pavement...

“Momma!” Floyd, 46, calls out. “Momma! I'm through,” the dying man says, and I recognize his words. A call to your mother is a prayer to be seen. Floyd's mother died two years ago, but he used her as a sacred invocation...

To call out to his mother is to be known to his maker. The one who gave him to her. I watched the Floyd video, for us, the living. It's my sacred charge. I am a black mother.”

“But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.” (Acts 2:14-15)

Steve L., my high school friend, a white man who lives in Minneapolis, posted this on Facebook: “I am so disappointed in Minnesota right now my heart hurts. Not only at the knuckleheads that burned down their own community but extremely angry at the mayor, police chief, and governor who just let the city burn while sitting in their ivory towers and taking no action. In my opinion they should be removed from office immediately. As I take my dog out this morning and the heavy smell of burning building in the air I don't know if I am angry, hurt, disappointed, frustrated or all the above and more. I understand what happened to George Floyd is horrible and should never [have] happened but to destroy your own community just doesn't make sense.”

I can't read you all the comments but here was mine:

“I think the riots are happening because peaceful protests don't get heard (example: Black Lives Matter) and being law-abiding didn't protect them (example: Christian Cooper). It's suicidal, but violent protests are the voices of people who have been told over and over that their lives don't matter, so why not die fighting...maybe we'll pay attention to 400 years of oppression. The police aren't THE problem, they are just the most visible, physical face of white power and privilege kneeling on the necks of people of color. Which I know I have and participate in because I am sitting comfortably in my home while typing this...”

“No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

‘In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.  
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.  
And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.’”

(Acts 2:16-19)

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr said it long ago:

“But it is not enough for me to stand before you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contingent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that they have no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it America has failed to hear? ... It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice and humanity.”

What then shall we do?

Paul wrote:

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”  
(1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

What then shall we do?

Teresa of Avila calls us: (1515-1582)

“Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes  
with which he looks Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet  
with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands,  
with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

Officer Derek Chauvin knelt to subdue a man and George Floyd never breathed again.

Colin Kaepernick knelt to protest police brutality and is never again signed to play pro-football.

Be one body. You are the feet, the knees, the hands, the eyes, the body of Christ.

Kneeling and knelt on.

The Body. The World.

Jesus cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink.

As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"

(John 7:37-38)