

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The ending should be different! That is what I keep thinking as I watch and sadly re-watch the video of George Floyd's death. This is not right! This is not how a person, any person, of any color, culture, faith tradition, (add your own descriptor), should be treated! Where is the love for humanity? Where are the expressions of civility and decency? Where are the words and actions that stop this horrible scenario from happening?

Last week, a bystander video was made of Derek Chauvin, a now former Minneapolis Police Officer, showing him holding his knee to the neck of George Floyd. We see that Chauvin is white, and Floyd is black. We hear on the audio Floyd telling Chauvin that he cannot breathe. We see that other police officers are standing nearby. We hear people who are bystanders reiterating Floyd's words that he cannot breathe. Yet Chauvin keeps his knee on Floyd's neck for almost 9 minutes.

I keep picturing the video in my mind, wishing that it ended differently. In the version I imagine, when Derek Chauvin hears George Floyd say, "I can't breathe," Chauvin stops, takes his knee off of Floyd's neck, and helps him up. In another version, the crowd continues to tell Chauvin, "He can't breathe," or "If you continue doing this, he will die," or some other words that encourage him to stop. In another version, the other police officers tell Chauvin to stop, come over to him, and pull him off of Floyd. All of these scenarios were possible! But, they did not happen.

I do not mean to victimize those present who could have potentially done more, because I was not there. I do not know if they were people of color who had experienced racism, injustice, and inequality between white persons and persons of color in their own lives. Perhaps they had been victims of racist attitudes and the misused power and privilege of other people. Perhaps their voices had been silenced in the past by people choosing to devalue and degrade them. Perhaps they had witnessed other people killing their family members, friends and neighbors.

As you watched the video, what came to mind? Did you perhaps think of the horrible treatment that Jesus received from the Roman soldiers prior to his death? They had the power and privilege that made them feel superior to Jesus. They devalued, degraded and harassed him too. (Although in that scenario, Jesus chose not to use his superior power against them.)

The video of George Floyd's death could have ended differently, because the scenario could have started differently. We could live in a country where "Black lives matter," and all colors of people who have historically been discriminated against, matter. We could live in a country where human beings are treated with respect and civility by all police officers and other persons in positions of power. We could live in a country where all people are truly created equal.

We are not there yet. But as Christians, God calls us to be different. God calls us to move

beyond the ways of the world. God calls us to be salt and light in the world! We have heard and continue to hear God's Word. We are called to focus on peace, not war; respect for humanity, not divisiveness; and love for all that God has created, not hate.

Had you been there in-person watching Derek Chauvin, would you have said or done something to change the ending of the video? Is there something that you can do now and in the future, to help? Then do it.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy