

6 Pentecost 2020

O God, you are worthy of all our praise and worship. Today we celebrate your love and our relationship with you through Jesus Christ. Thank you for expressing your love for us in so many ways. As we think of your love, we are reminded of your call to love those around us. Help us to discover that the more we give ourselves to you, the more we have left to give ourselves to others. Make us servants in your name. Amen.

Friday afternoon, the Police went to an address in Detroit to arrest a man for an outstanding warrant. This person was outside on the front sidewalk with another man. The man in question gave up without incident or resistance. However, his friend who was not being arrested, reached into his left pocket and pulled out a gun. As an officer rushed toward him, the man fired at his head narrowly missing him. He fired off three more shots even as he himself was hit 4 times by return fire from the officers. I watched this on three different webcam views which the Police Chief showed yesterday. One of the views was in slow motion and clearly showed what happened. I bring this up not because this incident is a police shooting or a death of another black man. Sadly, **it is** both of those. I bring this up because of what happened over the next several hours. A hastily assembled peaceful protest that was enflamed by agitators. The crowds that marched in protest against the police with facts that were wrong. The crowd reacted to false reports on social media and many instigated violence over a few hours. Stories were circulating the deceased man had been shot several times while innocently sitting on his front porch. Also, that he was unarmed when he was killed. None of this was true, but people were willing to protest and some to promote violence. One video that appeared on Facebook had someone saying that they should all go out and kill some cops. Thanks be to God that this did not happen. The

Investigation is still ongoing but as the Police Chief said: “Thank God for the body cams”. The Chief reported that about 300 people gathered for the impromptu march. Several members of the crowd threw bottles, bricks and other projectiles at officers, who deployed tear gas and made eight arrests.

There was one brave lady from the local neighborhood who courageously stood between the police and the crowds. It was amazing to watch. I have no idea what her personal core values are but she was doing everything she could to maintain the peace and to try and calm everyone down. She was trying to prevent damage to the neighborhood and I am sure to prevent anyone else from getting hurt. She kept saying that Detroit did not need this, even when she herself had not seen any of the video evidence. These are the circumstances that society finds itself facing today. We struggle to know what our core values are and how to live them out.

Core values are a set of fundamental beliefs, ideals or practices that inform how one conducts their life, both personally and professionally.

What are some core values that we hold dear to? For many of us, that is not an easy question to answer. There are lists of up to 50 different values that one could aspire to. Just a few are:

Dependability; Reliability; Loyalty; Open-mindedness

Consistency; Honesty; Creativity; humor; spiritualism,

Compassion; Motivation; Positivity; Optimism

Respect; Courage; Perseverance; Patriotism

Service to others; Integrity; and many, many, more.

Some of these values are also important to businesses and **Yes** to the Church.

A business wants to be known by its integrity, honesty, and Service and those that choose to work for that business should agree to honor those values.

A Diocese and a Congregation also has listed core values that you usually find in the Mission Statement or somewhere on their website. I looked up ours at Christ Church Adrian. In our welcoming statement it reads: As you browse our site, you'll find an engaged, committed, compassionate and friendly congregation gathered around to worship God and living in service to others. We live enthusiastically sharing ourselves and our God-given gifts with others. We believe in a joyful, transforming and liberating response to God's loving call in Christ". In those three sentences you find listed **ten different** core values. Engaged, committed, compassionate, friendly, service, enthusiastic, sharing, joyful, transforming, and liberating. All important and certainly desired. But as I said above, core values fundamentally affect how one conducts and lives their life. They are that important or at least should be. If one joins with us in our mission to love and serve others as Jesus loves us, they need to know and honor those values. More about this later.

The parable of the sower is familiar to us. And since we have the explanation of the parable by Jesus, it leaves little room for further interpretation. But just for the heck of it, look at it from the standpoint of core values.

When someone thinks about their values, but have no idea of what they might be, it is like the seed sown on the hard path. Maybe they look at others that they respect and see values that they admire. They decide to try them out too. But they are easily swept away because

they have no roots in that person's life. Others may adapt values that they truly aspire to and want in their lives, but their other desires in life choke them out.

Then are those who do the hard work of looking deep within themselves to see what is really important and work to develop those values which are truly theirs and are God-given. No outside pressures will take those values away and with continued development, acting on them will come naturally, no matter the cost.

-ABC News had this story the other night. A Carmel Valley waitress showed her core values when San Francisco tech CEO Michael Lofthouse went on a racist, anti-Asian rant directed at a family from Southern California.

She told KGO-TV why she decided to step in.

Gennica Cochran's story is a real-life example of "What would you do?" Without giving it a thought, Cochran says she did what was right.

"Say that again," said Jordan Chan in a video that's now gone viral.

It was those words that caught Cochran's attention. The article reads:

"A Southern California family is speaking out after a San Francisco CEO went on a racist rant captured on video this weekend, while they were celebrating a birthday at Lucia, a Carmel Valley restaurant.

The incident happened over the Fourth of July holiday weekend. The Carmel Valley waitress says she had been watching Lofthouse all night. She wasn't serving him but had observed him switch tables and send back food multiple times, even being rude to her manager.

The final straw was when he began an expletive-laced racist rant directed toward the Orosa Chan family, who had been celebrating a birthday at a nearby table.

Cochran stepped in shouting, "You need to leave right now. Get out, you are not allowed here, get out now. You do not talk to our guests like that, they are valued guests, you are not allowed here ever again!"

"To hear the emotion coming out of my voice, to see my mannerisms, it was unbelievable. It was just something that came over me and I just did what needed to be done," Cochran told KGO reporter Melanie Woodrow. "I did what anybody else should or would do in that situation."

Cochran's entire life has about service. She's worked in hospitality for 20 years and has been teaching yoga for 10 years.

"I'm not a mother, but I felt almost maternal," she said. "Right, like this is my family and I will take care of them and I will do whatever I can to protect these people. To have someone hate you just because of the way that you look, that's beyond me. I don't understand it."

Cochran went on to say, "It's not something that I will condone ever again, being silent."

Lofthouse has issued a written statement apologizing to the family: "My behavior in the video is appalling. This was clearly a moment where I lost control and made incredibly hurtful and divisive comments. I would like to deeply apologize to the Chan family. I can only imagine the stress and pain they feel. I was taught to respect people of all races, and I

will take the time to reflect on my actions and work to better understand the inequality that so many of those around me face every day."

Cochran has a message for the Orosa Chan family: "I love you. I've got your back always. I will always speak up for you and please come back to Bernardus, I'd love to buy you a drink. And please just know that those words are not the values of the people that live here on the Monterey Peninsula."

She also has a message for the public: "If you see something do something. Stand up against racism and hatred in any form any time you can."

One final message: Cochran says be kind to your servers, it's a really tough job.

Her core values kicked in automatically and she took action out of love for others.

Now I admit that this connection with core values, maybe too simplified and not what Jesus was talking about at all. But we do need to pray and ask God to help, for us discover what our core values are and not what we think they should be. I frequently think that spirituality should be a core value for me, and it probably should be. I do try. Yet, is that where I find myself putting my time and effort in, or is it a struggle for me? Instead, am I more likely happiest when I am doing service, being compassionate, and caring? Yes, you can develop new core values but it is hard work. Since COVID, I am finding new areas that I am passionate about. Those will be the areas that I will engage in and stick with and will take root. If values have deep roots, they **will be lived** and will be evident to everyone around. Over the past 5 months, we have found out, more than ever before, that **we are** the church and not the buildings we have been kept out of. Most of us already knew that. I have looked at several church websites and Facebook pages. I am not criticizing anybody. But I

wonder how often the Welcoming statements are updated and that the congregation knows what the Mission statement says. Is it something that they can live with and emulate?

Ideally, the core values found in our welcoming statements and our Mission Statements should not easily be blown away by difficult times. They may have been enthusiastically received when written but have been eroded by the heat of controversy or choked out by decreasing Sunday attendance and withering finances.

When core values have deep roots, they are visible to those within the congregation and to the community and more importantly, they are lived out. With everything that is going on right now it is so important that we take the time to look within ourselves to see what our core values are. To ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to develop them, and to build upon them. If we say that we, as individuals or as a congregation, live out our Baptismal promises, we need to know what that means and what it costs. Then embody them. Let us pray.

Behold, Lord, empty vessels that need to be filled. Lord, please fill them. We are weak in the faith; strengthen us. We are cold in love; warm us and make us fervent that our love may go out to our neighbors. We may not have a strong and firm faith; at times we doubt and are unable to trust you altogether. O Lord, help us. Strengthen our faith and trust in you. Amen.

—Martin Luther