

Charlottesville - How are we to respond?

The pulpit is not a place, in my view, for personal opinions on politics. But the tragic and ungodly events in Charlottesville, VA and the subsequent vitriol and invective that have accompanied it, transcend their political implications. They become Gospel-centric issues and we must speak out because the Gospel and the Bible require us to do so. This is the core of the message I delivered to Northwest Christian Church this Sunday.

It starts with God's love ...

Our position at Northwest is, first and foremost, one of love. Love is what sent Jesus to Earth. Love is what put Jesus on the Cross. Love is what brought Jesus back to life. It is God's love for us, that has enabled you and I to find forgiveness of our sins, freedom from slavery to that sin and the power to love others, even those with whom we can't agree.

Jesus died for all people...even evil ones. No one is beyond the saving grace of Christ and we cannot forget that. When we see hate-filled people marching in the streets, harming others, and spreading that hate and fear all over the internet, we should respond first and always with love.

We are obligated to speak out ...

God's love compels us to speak out about the evil that we are witness to. Groups like the KKK, Neo-Nazis, and other white supremacists are evil and must not be supported on any level or in any way, not because we hate, but because of love. They represent the opposite of the Gospel and everyone who claims the name of Christ should oppose them and their views at every level and in all ways. We cannot rationalize what they stand for as "historical", "understandable", or simply an "alternate" view.

We also cannot begin to justify one group's horrific actions by trying to blame others. There is hate all around us and we must call it out wherever we see it. It is wrong to deflect attention and focus away from the evil of racism by claiming that others are racist too. Another person's hate and prejudice can never justify our own.

Rarely have the Apostle Paul's words been more poignant...

I encourage you to read each sentence and pause after each phrase to allow the weight of what Biblical Love is sink in:

Love is patient.
Love is kind.
It does not envy.
It does not boast.
It is not proud.
It does not dishonor others.
It is not self-seeking.
It is not easily angered.
It keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil.
It rejoices with the truth.
It always protects.
Always trusts.
Always hopes.
Always perseveres.
Love never fails.

May you and I show this sort of love to all men and all women, for we are all made in the image of our Creator. We are all loved by Him equally and completely. This is the essence of the Gospel and therefore racism of any kind is antithetical to that Gospel. It must never be tolerated by the people of Christ for it is anti-Christ.

We must respond with prayer ...

Please join me in praying for those families that have been impacted by the horrors of this racist, hate-filled mindset. Join me in praying for those whose hearts are filled with prejudice and hate. Join me in praying for our local, state and national leaders, including thought leaders around the globe who help shape our national and international discourse on this subject. And finally, join me in praying for the Church to set the tone and guide the way...the way of love!