

## **AN ENCOURAGING WORD FOR TROUBLING TIMES #105** (by Rev. Dr. Alice Wolfe, 8/5/20)

### **"I didn't know..."**

My first memory of learning about slavery in America was during the blizzard of 1978. Because we didn't have school for an extended time, I was allowed to stay up late and watch *Roots* (the made for TV series) by Alex Haley. I remember feeling horrified at the pain, suffering, and injustices the black slaves experienced—and I will never forget it.

I've had a similar experience the past few months. After hearing about more senseless killings of people of color and watching the protests and riots on TV, I have felt horrified at the pain, suffering, and injustices that people of color continue to experience in our nation today. I knew that racial discrimination still exists, but I didn't know how bad it still is and that our government and leaders have played a hand in establishing laws and practices that continue to enslave people of color in poverty, prisons, and pervasive injustices and discrimination.

I didn't know... However, after seeing and hearing about the recent events, I chose to rectify that situation. I have read (or listened to) over eight books and watched five movies about black history, Martin Luther King, Jr., and racism in our nation (past and present), and I have had various conversations with others about the racial problems in our world today and what we can do to help be part of the solution. After listening to some of the books, I had to take a break—because they were so depressing and disheartening. As soon as I had that thought, God reminded me—if I felt depressed and disheartened by merely listening to the stories and injustices, how do the people feel who experience them every day? Because I now know of the pervasive injustices and discrimination, I can't sit idly by. I must do something... James, the brother of Jesus, reminds us:

***"If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them."*** (James 4:17, NIV)

God did not hold me accountable for doing nothing about the injustices of which I was unaware, but now that I am aware, God holds me accountable. God is moving me to action... because it is the loving thing to do. What is God calling me to do? First, God is calling me to educate myself; I have begun and will continue that journey. Second, God is calling me, as a pastor, (through sermons, Bible studies, Facebook posts, etc.) to speak out against these injustices and to share God's Word and love to help people understand that he loves all of us and made all of us in his image. And third, God is calling me and my family to be more intentional about building relationships with and appreciating the various cultures of people of color, because our lives will be much richer and blessed for doing so.

As I began the adoption process (13 years ago) and declared my willingness to adopt a child with any color of skin, God asked me if I was willing to carry this cross (of racial discrimination). I immediately told God, "Yes," but I didn't know until now what that might mean; the time has come. I continue to pray for God's guidance and direction in all of my life, and now also in how God wants me to encourage others to love all people and stand up against the racial injustices in our nation. Now that I know the good God is calling me to do, I cannot ignore it. What about you?

### **PRAYER:**

Loving God, our Creator, thank you for creating all of us in your image, for sending Jesus to show us how to live and love, and for his sacrifice on the cross so we can be forgiven of our sins and restored in our relationship with you and others. I confess to you the times I have discriminated against or played a part in any injustices against people of color, or the times I have not stood up for what is right... Forgive me! Jesus, come and live and reign in me so that I will be a living witness of you and your love towards all people. Help me to stand up against the evils and injustices of this world and to live and give my life for others just as you gave your life for me and for all. Amen.

### **LIVE IT!**

Pray and reflect on James 4:17 and on your life and actions or inaction... What good is God calling you to do? Once you know, go do it!