

AN ENCOURAGING WORD FOR TROUBLING TIMES #123 (by Rev. Dr. Alice Wolfe, 9/14/20)

“Be part of the solution, not part of the problem”

Like many of you, I am heartsick for our nation. I am appalled at the growing violence. Much, if not all of it, is pure evil. It's bad enough that someone fired multiple shots at a couple of sheriff deputies' heads, but then protesters tried to block the entrance to the hospital so the wounded officers in the ambulance could not get medical help!? I realize that our nation has experienced and is guilty of major discrimination and injustices against people of different races, and I'm heartsick for the evils people have experienced. However, I also realize that more violence, discrimination, and injustices will NOT fix or solve the problem. Evil begets evil. The Apostle Paul spoke to this problem some 2,000 years ago (Romans 12:9-12, NRSV):

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.

It's time for everyone in our nation to ask the question, “Do I want to be part of the solution or part of the problem?” If we want to be part of the solution, then we cannot support or be a part of the violence going on, and we cannot ignore the violence and hope it goes away. We cannot overcome evil by spreading more evil. The only way to overcome evil is with good—love, forgiveness, kindness, generosity, and prayer. We need to pray to God and plead for all hearts to turn to Christ: (1) ours—that we will keep praying, seeking Christ's will, and striving to love all neighbors as Christ loves us; and (2) all who promote violence and evil—that they will see Christ's love in us and that they will let God change their hearts and turn from evil.

Just three days ago we remembered the infamous 9/11 when terrorists attacked our nation. Many caught the irony that 9/11 was like a 911 call for help. Today, our own people have become terrorists and are attacking our nation. Perhaps it's time for a new 911 call, but this time, let's make it a 911 call to God at 9:11 every day. I invite you to join me in praying—at 9:11 a.m. and/or 9:11 p.m. every day—for God to bring love, forgiveness, healing, and revival to our nation. (I just set a reminder on my phone to remind me to pray at both 9:11 a.m. and 9:11 p.m.) As we pray, let us also pray for ways we can show God's love to everyone around us—especially to anyone who may seem different from us. Let us

pray that we will be a good neighbor to everyone! Let us be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Let us, with God's help and by God's grace, overcome evil with good!

PRAYER:

Loving God, we confess that our nation has turned away from you, and we need you and your help! Forgive us for any evils and injustices we have caused as individuals or as a nation... Forgive us for anytime we have been part of the problem... Instead, I/we choose to be part of the solution from now on. We pray you will help bring healing in our nation by drawing people to you... and that you will help us love others and point people to you in all we are and say and do... We pray for healing for all who have been hurt..., for all who have done the hurting..., and for our nation... We pray for changed hearts and changed lives... Help us and our nation to overcome evil with your love, goodness, forgiveness, kindness, grace, and mercy. Amen.

LIVE IT!

Every day at 9:11 a.m. and/or 9:11 p.m., pray for healing, revival, love, and forgiveness in our nation!