

Dear Calvary Family,

Recent events in our country have shaken our society to its core. The issues of racial injustice and excessive use of force by government officials have been brought to the forefront of our minds through the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and George Floyd in Minneapolis. As the Elders of Calvary met this past week, we wanted to make sure that the members of the Calvary body clearly hear where we stand on these issues. The perception by many is that the American evangelical church has been silent on these issues. We acknowledge that there are many historical incidences where the church has either contributed to racial discrimination or failed to take bold stands when racism in our culture has been exposed. We hope the following will provide reassurance that Calvary is fully committed to preaching the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) as it applies to our daily lives.

What should our response be, as Christians and a church, to recent events? First and foremost, we believe that we should “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). To our brothers and sisters in minority cultures, we hear your cries, and we weep with you over the sin and injustice that has been perpetrated against you and other minorities. Racism, whether expressed through conscious choice of words or actions or through biases that have been absorbed through the culture, is sin. God created man in His image (Gen 1:27). He is gathering for Himself a great multitude from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, to be His people (Rev 7:9), and His house is a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17). There is no distinction at the cross of Christ based on race (Gal. 3:28). The leadership of Calvary condemns racism in any form as a distortion of the will of God. We long to create an environment where people from all cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds can gather to worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is good and proper for Christians to express the value of minorities as expressed in God’s Word and we encourage all of you to take bold stands in our society when racial discrimination is observed. But we also must examine ourselves to make sure we are not ignoring the racial biases we may hold (Matt 7:4). The Devil often works subtly through the American culture and media to cause us to absorb unbiblical ideas of those who are not like us, and we must ask God to search our hearts and thoughts (Psalms 139:23) and confess any sinful biases we may have adopted (1 Jn. 1:9).

Another current issue is the excessive use of force we see perpetrated by police. Is the system of American government and authority inherently unjust? The Scripture says that governing authorities are established by God, are servants of God, and we are to be subject to them (Romans 13:1-7). This principal applies to the highest level of governmental authority like the President all the way down to the local government officials like city council members and police officers (1 Peter 2:13). Paul urges us to pray and intercede for our government authorities (1 Tim 2:2). Government is not inherently evil, but the individuals in positions of power are sinful and fallen like everyone else (Rom. 3:23). They are prone to the same sins we are, including racial discrimination, and this can lead to sin being perpetrated on individuals in society. We condemn any actions taken by individuals in position of power that result in injustice. We call out to God to bring forth His justice (Psalms 10) and to hear the cries of His people who have experienced racial discrimination, and to act quickly (Psalms 13; Ex. 2:23).

As Christians that live in a society where the people constitutionally have the opportunity to voice their beliefs, we believe that peaceful means of protesting, marching, and speaking out are all activities that a Christian may choose as a means of stewarding the truths that God has given us. It is correct and good to seek justice and correct oppression (Is 1:17), and to love kindness (Micah 6:8). We believe that a

Christian should be willing to speak these truths into our current cultural issues surrounding racial and authoritarian injustice. We must also be quick to pray for our civil servants who are serving God faithfully in their appointed role. The family members of our police officers need to hear the voice of the church interceding for the safety of their father/mothers, husbands/wives, and sons/daughters who work in dangerous environments and for those officers to make bold decisions based on the Word of God, which may put them at odds with their colleagues or the society they have committed to protect.

While we affirm the above statements as true, we would be neglecting our duty as the Elders of Calvary if we did not ultimately point to the solution to the sin that leads to racial discrimination and the abuses of injustice. The solution to the problems we see in the world can only be found at the cross of Christ. We, as humans, have a sin nature (Eph 2:1-3). Our natural selves do not seek what is good, and worse, we are hostile to God and His law (Rom. 8:7). We all stand condemned under the law of God because we fail to worship Him as God (Rom. 1:18-23). But the good news (the Gospel) is that God saw us in our sinful state and loved us so much that He sent His Son to come to earth to die for us and reconcile us to Himself (Rom 5:8-10)! His sacrifice on the cross is sufficient to cover every sin and we are called to repent of our sinfulness and believe in His death, burial, and resurrection alone as the means of saving us (Mark 1:15). This offer of salvation and call to repentance is made to all, regardless of skin color, sex, social position, or any other means of distinguishing people, and it is our privilege as Christians to make this good news known to the unbelieving world (Matt 28: 16-20). When we are saved, the Spirit is given to us as the seal of our inheritance, and we are slowly transformed into the image of Christ as we grow in our knowledge of the Scriptures and what they reveal to us about Christ (Eph 1:13, 2 Cor. 3:18). The practical implications of this are that those who are saved will begin to love their neighbors, including members of different races, classes, and religions, like Christ did. They will take jobs as government officials, police officers, business owners, teachers, and many other professions and will begin to act as ambassadors of Christ in bringing God's truth to their jobs. But it can only be done through the speaking of the Gospel (Rom 10:14). That is our primary role as a church; to bring to the world the good news of God's grace through the reconciling work of His Son on the cross for sinners like you and me! We encourage all our members who want to see true and lasting change in our society to make sure the Gospel is front and center in their public calls for justice, as that is the only way for lasting change to occur in the lives of those who are currently trapped in their sins.

The Elders of Calvary understand the concerns that these issues have raised in the hearts of many of our members. We want you to know that we are here to listen to you and to pray with you. We love all of you and want you to know that you can come to us with any questions or concerns that you may have and that your opinions and thoughts are valued. We acknowledge we often misstep as we also are growing in our faith. We hope that you will patiently bear with us as we strive for unity to boldly proclaim the Gospel to ourselves and to the watching world, so that we may see the advance of Christ's kingdom until His return.

With Love in Christ,

The Elders