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Stand Up for Justice BY JOEL SUTTON

(I am writing this article during the time that our city is in turmoil. There is rioting in the streets at night, businesses are being looted and destroyed. At the same time, there is good happening. People are coming together, cleaning up streets, calling in one voice for justice in the George Floyd case and protesting against the ongoing injustice of racism.

This is an edited version of my sermon called, "Stand up for Justice" which I gave on Sunday, May 31st.)

It happened in our neighborhood. It happened down the street from the church. It happened last Monday. You've seen the video: George Floyd, a black man, died...after a white Minneapolis police officer who was arresting him pressed his knee on Floyd's neck so hard for several minutes that Floyd was crying "I cannot breathe!"

I have to tell you that the bystander video is hard to watch. I walked away from it, greatly disturbed. My heart was broken. The video shows a blatant disregard and dismissal of a man who was made

in the image of God. Proverbs 31:8-9 says, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." Friends, that is God's call for us - to speak up for justice.

Justice is a major theme of the Bible, especially a major theme of the Old Testament.

Micah 6:8: "What does the Lord your God require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Amos 5:24 "Let justice roll down like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream."

Job 34:12: "It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice."

Isaiah 1:17: "Learn to be right. Seek justice; encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."

Isaiah 30:18: "The Lord is a God of justice."

Isaiah 61:8: "I, the Lord, love justice."

Jeremiah 22:3: "This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place."

Zechariah 7:9: "Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other."

You may have noticed these verses are all from the Old Testament. So what about the New Testament?

James 1:27: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

In Matthew 12:18 God says about Jesus, "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. *(continued inside)*

Welcome Stacey Urbanz!

Our new Nursery Director!

My family has been attending First Free since the fall of 2018. I served as a nursery coordinator for 3 years and then my husband Geoff and I helped teach in the Critters (4/5 yrs old) room. I have been a part of MOPS and also currently help with leadership for the Women's Neighborhood Bible study that meets on Wednesday mornings. Most recently, I've helped start up the online nursery scheduling program while also volunteering with my older daughter Grace in the infants room 1x a month. I'm looking forward to this new role; working with the nursery coordinators to make sure our rooms are well organized and have across the board standards for all church programs!



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(continued)

In gospel of Luke, Jesus is calling out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and he says, "Woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God."

God is telling you and I, through His Word, that we need to get at least as energized about justice when someone else is the victim of injustice as we are when the injustice has happened to us. In particular, be concerned about injustice to those you might be inclined to overlook. It goes on everyday in our world.

Once again, John Stott says, "Love and justice combine to [address] all these situations. If we love people, we shall be concerned to secure their basic rights as human beings, which is also the concern of justice. The community of the cross, which has truly absorbed the message of the cross, will always be motivated to action by the demands of justice and love."

This week as I listened to the news reports of the death of George Floyd, I couldn't help but reflect on the story of the Good Samaritan. How the two religious guys avoided the mugged man because he didn't fit their definition of a neighbor. But the Samaritan, not only saw this man who had been beaten and lying on the side of the road, but he also had compassion which lead

him to action. He was a neighbor.

We have been front row witnesses to injustice. As a church in South Minneapolis, we must not be like the priest and the Levite. Instead we are called to love our neighbors, those whose needs we see, whose needs we are in a position to help.

God says, "When you see the hurt, when you see the needy, you're going to have to do something. You can't just walk on by. He or she is your neighbor. You can't pretend you didn't see it, because God sees the heart."

And the fact that we can't help everybody is no excuse to not help somebody. God will not hold us guiltless if we stay in our safe, middle class lifestyle while people are suffering and dying all around us.

Justice is not just a good thing, justice is a God thing. When we work for justice, we're truly working for God. When you stand up for justice in the school, on the streets, in the workplace, in our neighborhood, we are doing God's work. And since we live in an unjust world, there is going to be plenty for us to do.

You know what the Lord requires of you. Do justice. Get in there and make a difference. Stand up this week for what is right. Stand up for justice and when you do, God will be standing with you.

Roadmap to In-Person Gathering

- Phase 1: Online Church
- Phase 2: Small/Groups/Community Groups (phase we are in currently)
- Phase 3: Limited Building Use
- Phase 4: In-Person Sunday Worship

Learn all the details about each phase at firstfreechurch.org/roadmap

Serving in Uncertain Times by Elsa McClun



As I pulled into the parking ramp I remember thinking my job was difficult before all of this happened, but this global pandemic has brought a whole new perspective. The numbers rise and everyone scrambles to prepare. Policies seem to change hourly and questions are answered

with more questions. My regular assignment as an RN at Abbott Northwestern is on a cardiac unit that specializes in cardiac procedures such as angiograms, valve replacements, ablations, and pacemakers. When COVID-19 hit, my floor transitioned to become a strictly COVID unit, admitting only those who test positive for the virus and require hospitalization.

At the start of your shift, you change into hospital issued scrubs before entering the unit. As you walk on, you loop your mask behind your ears and are immediately reminded of the sores that have formed from the constant pull and rubbing of the mask. You wear your mask and face shield for the duration of your shift, only removing it to eat - if there's time for that. Additional gear including a gown and gloves are added when you enter a patient room. Every staff member who enters the room must sign a form indicating their title, the purpose for entering the room, how long you were in there, and what type


of PPE was used. As you add on the layers of PPE, you remember how simple things used to be. After ensuring you have all the proper gear on and all the equipment you could possibly need while inside the room, so as to reduce the number of times staff have to enter and exit throughout the day, it never fails that the moment you walk in there is something else you need. Every surface and object is wiped down every two hours and careful order is maintained in an attempt to keep everyone safe. What used to be quick tasks now take twice the time. Until this week, staff were encouraged to wear their mask for as many shifts in a row as possible. The longest I went was two and a half weeks before the smell of my mask became unbearable. Now I get excited to put on a clean mask every morning!

Even though a lot has changed, there are still things about my job that have remained the same. I still talk with patients and sit with them as they go through some of their best and worst moments. I still send people home in better health than when they were admitted. I still hear the startling alarms and rush into rooms doing everything to save a life, but now it's done with gloves, a gown, a mask, and a face shield. Even though this time is unlike anything I have experienced, I still have so many opportunities to pray for patients and introduce them to Jesus. Every shift, I am reminded that COVID-19 doesn't stop the gospel. No diagnosis or virus can stop God from drawing people to Himself. May we all continue to pray that we see God in every situation.

Church Family News

Congratulations to Kate and Nate Pattee on the birth of their son Levi Christopher Pattee!

Congratulations to Maria and Jonathan Kraft on the birth of their son Cassius Nathaniel Wise Kraft!



STAYCATION BIBLE CAMP UPDATE:
Over 150 kids are participating in our virtual StayCation Bible Camp, June 15-19. Please pray for the kids who are participating. Pray that they feel God's love and know that Jesus' power pulls us through!