



Possibilities

Trayce Potter Minister for Youth and Young Adult Engagement

For nearly two weeks, attention has been fixed on national media outlets as the trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin has proceeded. New details have emerged surrounding the last 9 minutes and 29 seconds of the life of Mr. George Floyd as he laid face down on the pavement. Many have painfully relived the horror of watching the final labored breaths leave Floyd's body and, as a result, have subconsciously found themselves holding their own breath in the process. I have found myself being one of those but the inability to breathe far transcends the moment.

You see, I have a three-year-old son who is the light of my life. He is well-mannered and funny and smart and everything I prayed for and dreamed about. He walks into a room or bounces across the camera during zoom meetings, and people remark how charming and cute he is. And I smile and hold my breath slightly. I want to live in the moment, but I know that in a few years, my son—who has always been ranked in at least the 96th percentile for height in his age group—will overnight become a threat to some, not because his demeanor or manners have changed but because he will be a tall, strong, articulate black male. And so I hold my breath to offer a prayer that God will keep Micah forever in God's path.

We proclaim to serve a God of justice and love who commands us to be our sibling's keeper, and I pray that we—as the Church and as neighbors—find ways to love justice for the sake of our children who will grow up looking different, or being differently abled, or living outside of society's constructions of acceptability so that parents can exhale.

George Floyd was a brother, a boyfriend, a son. Most importantly in my eyes, he was a child of God who represented the sanctity of life given by our Creator. We grieve that loss of life and await what justice will, or will not, look like in this particular instance. Black Americans are holding their breath and bracing for a jury of peers to decide if we can breathe again.

We as a nation need to pause and ponder what are we teaching our children with every “not guilty” verdict when a police officer walks free after ending a life. What are we as children of God saying about God’s creation when we deny the inequities between a black life mattering and a white life on trial? What are we saying when a nation watches an unarmed, handcuffed, un-convicted dead black man being put on trial while a white man’s actions are defended as appropriate?

Each day we have an opportunity to change the world by doing small acts of kindness and extending grace for those we encounter. In doing so, I believe we allow one another the space and opportunity to breathe—and to fully enjoy that breath. We have work to do around racial justice and, depending upon your race and ethnicity, the work will look differently. But today seems like a good day to start breathing and letting others do the same.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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