
I Am For The Police. I Am For The Protesters. It Makes Me Want To Cry.

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

Andrew Young, as usual, said some extraordinarily good things over the past weekend, a weekend when our beloved city of Atlanta witnessed both protests and violence (and they are two very different things!). But I resonated in particular with one of the first things he said: “It makes me want to cry.”

I wanted to cry, too. I was sick throughout the weekend. I was heartbroken sick, but I was also almost physically sick, for at least three reasons.

For one, the violence and destruction were sickening. Yes, I know that most of the protesters were not violent, and most were not intending to be violent or destructive. I am for the protesters. But a few bad actors were part of the gatherings, and they ended up prevailing in some cases.

Some white folks were scared. I found myself worried about things. But that fear reminded me of a far more serious fear. Many black people, and black men, live in that kind of wary fear much of their lives. Let me say that again: reasonable and rational and strong black men live every day in a kind of fear that something unjust can occur to them. That is not right; that is not righteous.

That's the second thing that made me sick. The continuing revelations of violence against black people are nauseating. We all know that most police officers are good and righteous people. I am for the police. But the bad actors among the police officers, and the lapses in judgement by otherwise good officers, are stunning America. I do want to remember the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner. And, of course, the young Georgian, Ahmaud Arbery, who died in some sort of racist vigilantism.

Yes, I know that all whites are not the problem. But I also know that this is a problem for all whites. It is especially a problem for those of us white people who are committed desperately to loving all of God's people. The revelation of a few bad actors has exposed deeper racism that is a part of all of us. Most of us white people have benefitted, to one degree or another, through systems and structures that are tilted toward the wealthy and the powerful – and that's a lot of white people, and white supremacy – not a lot of black people, or black supremacy.

So, yes, racism is a severe problem not just for blacks. It's a problem for whites, it is a white problem. And it's a problem for any of us who want to care for our brothers and sisters of whatever race they are. I care for the police; and I care for the protesters.

My sermon this Sunday will be about “relationship.” This Sunday is Trinity Sunday, and – for me—the doctrine of the Trinity is about relationship. I have not actually written the sermon yet, but I will. The sermon may work; and it may not. I am uncertain.

In fact, that sense of uncertainty is where I am these days. I have tried to work all my life against racism, both personal and corporate. I remember in college when my good friend, who was black, and I decided to room together; we intended to make a Christian witness of relationship. But I have been part of plenty of other things that have not worked. My meager contribution of working against racism has worked some and it has not worked some. It is incomplete and has a long way to go.

The last reason I was sick was because I am tired. I am just tired of it all, and physically and emotionally drained, too. Maybe we are all tired. The stress of the past three months has exhausted us in ways we may not even be aware of.

I don't like telling myself when I am tired, or telling anyone when they are tired, that we need to do more. But we can take a stand. We are not too tired to do that. We can declare where our foundations are, where our sources of strength are. It does us good to admit that. It does us good to admit the truth. In fact, speaking the truth can lift us from our fatigue. Speaking the truth can renew us.

No, I do not support violence, against anyone. I do not support destruction of property. Yes, I do support the police. Yes, I do support the protesters. I support people of good faith and good will. I support seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving God and loving my neighbor as myself.

AMEN.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Sam Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip