

Why I Got Involved in the Trayvon Martin Case

My daughter's school bus passed by the apartments where **Trayvon Martin** was killed. She observed a crowd gathered with signs, she saw the flowers, pictures and crosses left at the gate.

Later that day she asked me, "Is that for that boy, Trayvon, who was shot?"

As a local pastor, I asked myself whether I should get involved in the situation. There is a part of me that wants to stay out of it. But with my daughter's question, it hit home. God has placed me in this community to be a witness to the **gospel**.

When contemplating his looming death on the cross, Jesus faced the choice of whether to get involved in the mess of human sin and struggle when he asked, "What shall I say? 'Father save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" (John 12:27-28, NIV)

Jesus could have remained uninvolved, but that is not what He came to do. Like Jesus, we have a choice. What shall we say, "Father save us from this mess, or is it for this very moment that we are called to be a light for Jesus in the very midst of community's pain and struggle?"

I participated in a Good Friday prayer service with more 60 Christian clergy from various denominational, racial and ethnic backgrounds to pray about the situation and for our Sanford community. Earlier in the week, I had sent an encouragement to other church leaders to attend the gathering and I received this criticism: "I am appalled that you would hijack this precious day [Good Friday] on behalf of a political, pandering and sad episode in our community."

The “sad episode” certainly has been hijacked by political opportunists. When I see how the case is being handled and mishandled in the media and by some national personalities and groups, I too get cynical. When I hear the commentary breaking along the same old political divisions—liberal and conservative, Republicans and Democrats, black and white—I cannot help but to agree that there are those who are using a tragedy in our community as an opportunity to pander to a political agenda. I think to myself, “What a mess! Satan is having a field day with all of this and with us.”

But did not Good Friday—of all days—speak into this sad, angry and tragic mess?

All of the worst aspects of human existence were present on the day Jesus was crucified: the mob “justice,” vigilantes, corruption in the governing authorities, political and financial opportunism, leaders “washing their hands” of responsibility, twisted media coverage, denials of truth, false witnesses, racial prejudice, criminals going free, wrongful prosecutions, the crucifixion of the King of kings. Yet it was God’s design to take the mess, the tragedy and the ugliness of our human sin and use it to bring redemption and salvation to the whole world.

“Jesus said, ‘... Now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.” (John 12:30-33). In being lifted up on the cross, Jesus puts an end to Satan’s dividing and destroying of the people of God.

The occasion of Trayvon Martin’s tragic death can merely be an opportunity for the evil one to destroy our relationships and our community. But, the Lord would have us see it as an opportunity for the gospel of **Jesus Christ** to shine. As Jesus is lifted on the cross, people are redeemed, restored and drawn together.

We, the people of the cross, are called to be the salt and light of our neighborhoods. We cannot accomplish that role if we hide the light of the gospel in the moment when it is needed most. The cross is God's answer to all human struggle and tragedy. He made the sad episode, a precious Good Friday. He will do the same in our day, if we will follow Him in His way. Jesus is the redeemer of sinners and the lover of our souls.

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