



Justice and Racial Reconciliation

Matt Chandler – July 10, 2016

Well, good morning. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you'll grab that, we're going to be in one verse today. In fact, we're going to look at one sentence today, Micah 6:8.

What I want to do with our time together today is I just kind of want to step into the fray of this past week, knowing that there are a lot of land mines there and there are a lot of things that could go wrong by doing this, yet I think the people of God need to enter this dialogue with the type of conversation that I hope will ultimately bring healing to souls and really will allow us to operate as the people of God in the midst of continued tragedy on all sides of this festering wound in the American landscape.

It was a tale of two weeks for the pastoral staff here at The Village. I'll try to explain that. I got back into town on Wednesday morning and really didn't know. I don't take my phone with me or things like that on vacation, so I was completely unaware of the two shootings that had occurred. When I got back in and saw the news, I just immediately made a couple of calls to African-American friends of mine to just tell them I was sorry and just to mourn with them.

Really between Wednesday at noon and Thursday at 2:00, I held in my arms and wept with three grown African-American men and then left my office to start my weekend. Thursday night is my Friday night. Friday night is my Saturday. Saturday, I'm here with The Village Church getting ready to preach two services that night. I went home Thursday. Then, of course, we saw what we saw Thursday night.

All day Friday for us then turned to loving and weeping with law enforcement officials. In fact, we were invited down to Dallas. Josh and I went down to Dallas and got to be a part of the prayer rally there at Thanks-Giving Square, praying for the mayor, praying for the chief of police, and having a lot of conversations with our law enforcement officials.

Something that struck me that Josh and I talked about on the way home is that both the black community and the blue community tend to feel very similar things in these situations, although people might not like that I say that. What I mean by that is my conversations with my African-American friends have involved sadness and rage, a type of despair. In my conversations with law enforcement officials, their emotions are sadness and rage and a sense of despair.

On the way back home, Josh and I were talking about how we could ever get out of this mess. For goodness' sake, it has just been going on forever. When will this ever end. What is the way forward? I mentioned the verse we're about to read. Then we began to talk about the implications of this verse. Here's what I want to do. I'm going to talk for another eight minutes. Then I'm going to invite out to join me on the stage four of our African-American brothers and sisters. Three of them are on staff. One is a deaconess here at The Village Church.

What I want you to do is hear from them and not me today. We're going to do a little panel, but I want to set up the panel like this. Micah 6:8. A lot of theologians would say that the whole of the Old Testament could be summarized in this sentence. Here is the sentence. **"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"**

That sentence looks like a preacher's dream, doesn't it? I have three points right there. How easy is that? I don't even have to come up with three points. They're there. Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. I'm a poem and a funny illustration away from being done. Yet that's not what's happening in the text. See, what's happening in this text is the explanation that in order to do justice, which is action, you must love kindness and you must walk in humility.

If you cannot walk in humility and you do not love kindness there will never be any justice, regardless of the color of your skin. On the way home, Josh and I began to talk about the power of empathy and really the belief that out of the Scriptures, kind of extrapolating and distilling from the Scriptures what the Bible would teach around justice, is that progress in the arena, in the arena that we're stuck in this week, will only go as far as our empathy will carry us.

I want to set up our panel like this. In order for us to grow in empathy, it will require humility. You can't be empathetic if you are proud. You just can't do it. If you think you're awesome and you've accomplished... If your way is right, and you don't need to learn anything, and you know what you

need to know, then you can never be empathetic because you're so dadgum awesome. You're just so amazing and your worldview is so amazing and you're so right, how could you ever feel deeply about anybody other than those with your exact same story? It requires humility.

The second thing it requires is presence. You will never develop empathy on Facebook or Twitter. It requires proximity. It requires proximity. You develop empathy by having deep, legitimate relationships. Lastly, empathy and developing empathy requires sacrifice. To enter into the pain of others, to enter the sorrow of others, to enter even the rejoicing of others means there's a part of me that dies. Yet I come out more human over time.

Two things I want to set up for our panel. First, there are some theological truths. Second, there are some historical facts. Then I'm going to just invite our panel out and let them introduce themselves. Here are some things we embrace as Christians. If you're a Christian, you believe this. We believe in the *imago Dei*, that all men and women were created equal in dignity and value and worth by a Creator, that we are far more valuable as humankind than anything else in all of the creative order.

A man with Down Syndrome who cannot take care of himself but needs care is more valuable than Secretariat ever was because he has been made in the image of God and Secretariat was a horse...a stunningly beautiful, powerful horse, but a horse...not a man. A man has more value. That doesn't free up man to be cruel; it frees up man to be the image of God. We believe that.

We believe that sin has infected all of mankind. We believe that there is salvation from sin. We believe as Christians in progressive sanctification. Let's talk about that. When you start to pull on that, it begins to set up the framework for our discussion today. What we mean when we talk about progressive sanctification, when we quote verses like, "He who began a good work in me will be faithful to complete it," we're making a confession that we are not yet what we will eventually be. That's what progressive sanctification means.

It means that when God sees me, he sees me by the blood of Christ as holy and blameless and spotless in his sight, but my practical experience is that I am not holy, not blameless, and not without fault. In fact, if you know me, you know this isn't true, and if you know yourself, you know this isn't true. What makes the gospel so stunning is that as broken, as idolatrous, and as foolish as I am, God loves me, cherishes me, likes me, and sees me as perfect, is not biding his time for me to get more mature before he loves me.

On top of that, he uses me despite my brokenness. He's not waiting for me to be perfect before he uses me. In fact, oftentimes, he'll use my imperfections for his glory. That's crazy. Let me pull it down to this then. Because there are no perfect people and we are all works in progress, that means all systems and structures created by men are intrinsically faulty and broken. Because there are no perfect men, there can be no perfect systems.

There are systems that are better than others, but there is no ship in culture, society, government, rule, regulation that does not have cracks in its hull. They don't exist because there's no such thing as a sinless man outside of Christ. There are men seen by God as holy, spotless, blameless in his sight, but we are broken, and we build broken things.

If you're a Christian, this is our worldview. Now, with that said, let me walk through some historical facts. These aren't my opinions; these are historical facts. There has been no ethnic group that has borne the brunt of the brokenness of systems and structures in the United States of America like our African-American brothers and sisters have. We do not have equal historical place in America.

History shows on repeat the betrayal of African Americans by the very systems and structures that were meant to protect them. From the Emancipation Proclamation to 40 acres and a mule that were very quickly taken back from African Americans and handed back over to former plantation and slave owners, only to institute a new type of slavery, on in to Jim Crow, to the Great Migration, into the Civil Rights era. We have nothing in our history but that the systems and structures built to protect and defend have oftentimes borne the dark edge of their blade on African Americans.

I just don't see how you can argue that this isn't our history. This is our history. This is true. Because this is true, this has created a very real fear and rage, a version of PTSD that haunts our African-American brothers and sisters. I think the only shot we have for progress is to develop a deep sense of empathy that is not paternalistic, an acceptance that history has broken some things, that systems certainly are broken, and an empathy in our hearts toward that so that we might actually mourn with those who mourn.

I can put it in this arena, and maybe it's helpful. It is not uncommon for me to have to go to the hospital because a member of our church has died suddenly and tragically. When I show up, and there's the wife, or there's the husband, or there's the mom and dad sobbing their eyes out, I don't start digging around for the facts before I'm willing to enter into their mourning. I don't go, "Listen. I see that you're really broken and really angry. Let me tell you theologically why you shouldn't be."

I don't show up and see them mourning and see them broken and crying out and angry, and I don't enter that space and go, "Now where were you when that happened? Gosh, didn't you think to do..." How wicked of a son of a gun would I be if that's how I handled brokenness? The inability of primarily Anglos to enter the sorrow of our brothers and sisters stems from a lack of proximity, stems from a lack of empathy and a lack of understanding of some of the systemic issues of our nation's history that has brought us to this point.

Let me save you the email. I'm white. I like being white. I don't feel guilty for being white. I'm not operating out of white guilt. I'm operating out of a desire to be the people of God in a very dark time. I don't want you to hear any more from me. I want you to hear from our brothers and sisters, men and a woman who serve you week in and week out, who love you week in and week out, who are all over our staff structure, from central elder to deaconess to minister to resident that we'll be sending out.

Will you just join me in welcoming our panel today? It will not be an easy thing for them to share their hearts with us. Come on out, guys. While they're bringing out chairs, why don't we do this. Why don't we start with Anthony. Why don't you introduce yourself, say what you do, talk about how long you've been at The Village, and then we'll go from there.

Anthony Moore: Yeah, I'm Anthony Moore. I'm the campus pastor in Fort Worth. I've been here about two years.

Rob Daniels: Hey, guys. Rob Daniels. Connections minister. I've been on staff almost three years.

Nikki Lawrence: Good morning. Nikki Lawrence. I've been at The Village for about five years. I serve in Connections with this guy for about three, and I am in the deacon process here.

Mike Dsane: Mike Dsane. I am the pastoral resident at the Dallas Campus, and I've been at The Village just a little over two years.

Matt Chandler: Okay. I want us to just have real open dialogue and not to worry about how that might be perceived or broken down, because really what I'm after today is for you to help us understand and get a sense of what times like this feel like, not that we can correct those feelings, but I want us to understand what it is that happens on a week like this.

You'll find out as we begin to converse that not one black person could speak for all black people. Nobody has ever asked me to speak for all white people. There are four different perspectives up here, and there are more than that, but this is a good start. Rob, I want to start with you. You and I have gotten to talk several times this week. Will you unpack for us a bit what you experience, what you feel, what goes on in your heart and head on a week like this?

Rob: Yeah. My heart is super heavy. I'm tired. I'm frustrated. I'm angry. I'm mourning. I'm tired of seeing what appears to be the genocide of my people. I'm mourning just the death of these men and many others. Yeah, I walk around in a great deal of fear just wondering. Alton, Philando Castile, that could have been me. I could have been sitting in the passenger seat of my car with my wife and my son in the backseat and doing everything right.

That could have been me, so that provokes a great deal of fear in my heart. It's a hard week. It's a heavy week. My wife walks around in fear, wondering, "Am I going to be like those other wives? Am I going to be a single mom? Will I have to explain certain things to my son that my white brothers and sisters in Christ may not ever have to?" It's hard.

Matt: I want to keep digging in with you here. Two of the things we've talked about this week that really were heartbreaking for me... One was that as loved as you are here... You know you are, man. I just watch people love you. I've seen you hold more white babies than I think anybody else here, including nursery workers. "Uncle Rob! Here."

Yet, you shared with me this week that even as much as you're very much a part of us, you never really feel quite at home, and there is very much a way that you don't feel safe even with us in sharing certain parts of your heart, certain ways that you're thinking. Can you unpack that a little bit for us? I know for me (and I know I speak for a lot of us), that's heartbreaking news because we do love you so much.

Rob: Thanks, Matt. Yeah, I live in a city where I shop in stores where I am, most of the time, the only black dude in a store. I drive on streets where I don't really see a lot of people who look like me also driving on these streets. I'm uncomfortable. There's a level of discomfort and fear in my heart because I really don't know if this is the day that I get in my car and something could happen to me.

Yeah, it's hard. Living in a city where I just don't see a lot of black men. Translate that into the context of the church. The Village Church is not how I grew up. There is a sound that I love to hear, and it's not here. There is a form of preaching, a type of preaching that I grew up listening to and grew up worshipping to, and it's just not you, Matt. That's nothing against you. I love you.

Matt: Thank you. I could try to whoop..

Rob: No, don't. We don't need that.

Matt: No? Okay.

Rob: Yeah, just the reality of that is that I often come here to The Village, and I'm uncomfortable, but I dismiss my comforts. I dismiss what I want for the sake of the gospel and the explicit truths of God's Word because that's more important, but it's uncomfortable, and it's difficult.

Matt: Does anybody else want to weigh in on that? Just kind of feelings, thoughts from this past week?

Mike: Yeah, I think Rob articulated so much of it well, but just to echo the feeling unsafe and also the anger. I'm thankful for you because this conversation started Wednesday morning. It also was a Thursday afternoon before it became local, but a lot of what I was seeing in social media was when it became a Dallas thing, that's when people started to care.

There was a frustration of, "Why was there not lament on Wednesday and earlier Thursday?" I know people tend to care when they're directly affected, but it made it feel like people weren't deeply affected when Alton and Philando had lost their lives?

Nikki: Yeah, Matt, I would say I echo the anger and the fear and the anxiety, but the emotion that was unique or surprising to me on this round was I felt like I wanted to withdraw a little bit. I feel like in those times when you're navigating how you feel about those tragedies yourself, it wasn't my white brothers and sisters.

I have dear friends who are white. It's a good gift from the Lord, but those weren't the people who I innately wanted to run to, and that was kind of new for me. I love people. I love spending time with

my people, but there was this kind of need or desire to kind of isolate this week as I processed all of that. I was surprised by that.

Anthony: Yeah, I find myself processing a little different. I think just to reiterate what you said, that not all black people are the same. We're not Borg, so we don't all respond the exact same way. I have not had a lot of those feelings. Although, I have the experiences. I can point to them. But the place where it really breaks down for me and becomes difficult is trying to explain to my three boys what the history of all of this is.

It's just hard to pull them together and say, "This is what it is. This is why." I don't have categories for that. I don't know how to shepherd them through that. I think for me, there's a plea, and there's kind of a cry in my own heart. The thing I want to say to them is, "Listen. The way forward is to know that racism is not the unpardonable sin. It's just not.

There's a good likelihood, a good potential that they could worship for eternity alongside someone who got the issue of ethnicity or race wrong here on this earth. We have that type of scandalous Christianity and grace that has been given to us. Grace in, grace out.

Matt: Thanks, Anthony. Let me ask you, Mike. There are a lot of white folks, and if we could see through the camera there are even more of them. I think what I find in these situations is... I never want to take that there are stupid people off the table because that's just reality, but I think what persists at The Village in particular is there is a desire to help, a desire to understand, but we can only know what we know, and we don't know what to ask. We don't know what is going to be offensive. We don't know how to ask.

There is this feeling of walking on eggshells, but we want to know. I remember when we first started having this conversation, I would get emails like, "If you keep pushing on this, we're leaving." I had to go early on, "Well, there are a lot of good churches in the area, so you can go ahead and move your membership and get it over with."

Now, what is left after four years of really trying to have this conversation, trying to move this ball forward is people who really want to understand and want to know. Can you coach us a little? What is helpful? What is not helpful? Not just in a season like this but like a month from now. What is helpful, and what is not helpful?

Mike: Yeah, I think what is immensely helpful is just the ability to mourn. Sometimes, that mourning is being present without saying a lot. To feel the weight of, to be overwhelmed with in tragic seasons. I think in seasons that are not tragic, to be mindful of. I think we often think that we care about something, so therefore, we pray for it, but I think the other way is also true. If you're continually intentionally praying for something, your care for that thing will grow.

If we care about racial reconciliation, we ought to be praying for it, and that ought to be something that is part of us. I think those two things are helpful. I think two things that are unhelpful is initially, tragedies are not teaching tools. To enter into the conversation in such a way where it's, "What can I glean from this? How can I learn from this?" That's not helpful. Philando, Alton, all of these officers...Officer Ahrens, Officer Zamarripa, Officer Krol, Officer Thompson, Officer Smith...are real people who lost their lives. They're not illustrations to something.

There are families that are altered because of that. We have to enter into tragedy in that way. Then I think the other part of it is this. Oftentimes, very well-intentioned people will say, "Well, I don't see color. I'm colorblind." Don't strip me of that. That's part of my hurt. It's also part of my heritage, just like your heritage and your hurt is bound up in part of who you are. My blackness is not all that I am, but it's certainly not less than who I am. Let's not strip each other of that. I want to give that to you in the way you see the world, and I also want to be granted that in the way I see the world.

Matt: That's good. Thank you. Anyone else on that?

Nikki: I would just say from a practical perspective, I would encourage you to say something. Where there is relationship, enter in. I had some sweet friend text me his week and just say, "I don't know what to say, but I don't want to not say anything." Even that was such a balm to a fresh wound reopening. Where there is relationship, I would encourage you to reach out. Where there is not relationship, it's not the time, in tragedy, to do so, but that is very helpful. Silence, I would say, is not helpful in times like this.

Anthony: I can't help it. Just as a pastor, wanting and desiring that Fort Worth and all of The Village Church and all believers have this conversation in a way that is different than the world. May we not accept the categories and the definitions and the way that they ask questions. If someone were to say to you, "When is an appropriate time to abort a fetus?" I hope that you would say, "I don't want to answer the question you're asking. I don't want to answer that."

I think the same is true with regard to this conversation. There are terms and ways of asking it that don't demonstrate what we believe, fundamentally who we are in Christ has been reconciled. We're unified. We are one in Christ.

Rob: Yeah, I think, Mike, to your point, just to give a little context to mourning, when we say it's helpful to mourn with us, it brings healing to see a white brother or sister cry with me because what is behind our mourning is more than an Alton Sterling. It's more than a Philando Castile. It's more than a Michael Brown. It's more than an Eric Garner. It's more than a Sandra Bland.

It's more than the indigenous African kings and queens who never made it over here from slave ships. It's more than the history of being lynched as a people. We mourn deeply. When we see these things, they remind us of something so much deeper, of a history of this country that continues to point us back to that. We mourn rightly. Enter into that with us and cry with us. That is what is really helpful.

Matt: That's good. Hey, Anthony, I would love for you to share. We talked a little bit about... The Village Church is filled with law enforcement officials and officers and Secret Service agents, and you were talking last night about a conversation you had with one of our members who is on the Fort Worth Police Department. Can you talk a little bit about kind of how he is seeing these things and kind of what he is carrying in the middle of all of this?

Anthony: Yeah, sure. I wanted to call him first and foremost just as a pastor and let him know that I cared and loved him, but I also felt the weight of... I wanted to let him know that as a black man, I also care. I feel the weight. There are several. He is a white police officer, and we have three or four of them in the congregation at Fort Worth. I was reaching out.

He in particular, I couldn't get ahold of him. When he finally responded back, he said, "I'm sorry. I've been sleeping. I'll be honest. It's a real weird feeling right now to love Jesus, to love people, to be hurting in this situation, and yet feel the fear of putting on that uniform." He just said, "I'm afraid." I think what he meant by that was... I'm assuming he was saying he's going to be misunderstood. People are going to try to kill him. People are going to try to hurt him.

He's worried of all of those things, and it just dawned on me. I was getting texts from all different people. It dawned on me that it is interesting that these groups are saying the exact same thing. This side is saying it not because of a uniform but because of their appearance, the color of their skin.

They're saying, "I'm afraid. I'm worried about being misunderstood. I'm worried about being hurt, all of those things. I'm worried people are going to think I'm trying to hurt them."

It's an interesting thing to watch both groups saying the exact same thing. I don't think there's anything lost by... If we were actually thinking as missionaries we would go to a culture, a missionary context or something, and we would look at things and say, "There are things to celebrate about that culture, and there are things that are dark about it."

We wouldn't have a problem with just acknowledging the difficulty of it and the goodness of it. I think it's important to do that right now, just acknowledge some of the difficulty of it and also celebrate what is good about it on both sides. Yeah.

Matt: Starting about six years ago, the elders of The Village Church kind of just put a stake in the ground and said, "We're going to commit to, as best we can, becoming a diverse congregation of believers in Christ. We're going to hire that way. We're going to try to think that way. We're going to try to learn that way. We're going to try to..." It has been slow, a lot slower than I would like, but we have gotten some traction in the last couple of years.

One of the things I'm interested to hear you guys talk about is if there was a church that was just kind of nailing this, and not in a moment like this going, "Okay, let's have this conversation," but a church that showed with its budget, with its staff, with its preaching, with its singing, with its whole heart that what they were after is not to become a black church but to become a diverse church, where we look more and more and more like Romans 7 every year, where every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth are represented. What would it look like to nail it? Keep in mind the audience we're talking to. What does it look like to nail being serious about being a multiethnic church?

Anthony: I've been talking a lot, so I was trying to... I'll be quicker. The pastor in me wants to preach. I think proximity matters. You think about the Lord who inhabits the glory of God himself and is at the right hand of the Father. He comes down and tabernacles among us. He lives among us. Proximity matters. I think it matters that we be careful not to group up in just one place but that we spread out as believers into hard areas and all over the world and that we're intentional about that.

I think I would say to be careful because you're not the solution. You're going to bring your own complexities and sin, but the gospel that you have is the answer, and in all the ways that you can here in Flower Mound, there in Fort Worth, all over the place, us being intentional to think of

ourselves as elect exiles. We don't belong here. The Lord is not creating a people to be faithful just for 60, 70, 80, 90 years, but for him for eternity, and he's using your life here to get you ready for that. Live on mission.

Mike: I would add to that where proximity is not possible, partnership always is. I think a church that is nailing it is praying for, supporting church plants and church planters that are in hard contexts that are different than theirs, that are saying, "I'm praying for you. I'm sending you resources, not to make you us but to let you be you as effectively as you can be." I think even being mindful and learning the names of inner city church plants or different context church plants that you can be praying for and partnering with is a big way the church can nail it.

Nikki: Matt, if I could add, I think we're always talking about it as a church. I think it's a fluid conversation all year regardless of what's happening in our society. I think that is reflected in blogs strategically, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etcetera, that we're continuing to just address the history between the two groups and push forward racial reconciliation.

Rob: I love the missional aspect, and I think if we kill it, if we're nailing it, we're about mission. We're ferocious and unapologetic about the gospel, and we don't mind being uncomfortable. This conversation can't just end with us just talking about it, but I think we also, if we're going to be serious about it, be about entering into uncomfortable spaces.

For some of us, that may mean moving. For some of us, that also may mean partnering. If we're killing it, we're ferocious and serious about the gospel, not just talking that we're believers and Christians, but we're actively sharing our faith wherever we go in hopes that some may come to know Christ who don't look like us.

Matt: That's good. So, this will be the only service that I asked this question. What am I not asking that I should be asking?

Mike: I think the question would be, "What's next?" You hear this panel. You hear us. You see us. We all sit in a manner of grief or frustration or anger. I think the lingering question for all of us is, "What next? What do we do after this? Has this just been another great panel? Have you just heard more stories?" I think the question is really, "What's next?"

Matt: Okay. What's next, guys?

Mike: Lunch.

Matt: Well, lunch is for sure. Lunch with each other? Okay.

Anthony: I think it's worth us sitting down and really counting the cost too. It's a loss right now that we as the church don't have a platform to stand on and say right now to our country, "Look at us. We have it figured out," but I think that's what in the Scriptures... Ethnicities gathered together, united together, and people are trying to figure out, "What in the world unites these people but the blood of Christ?" I think that's what we're supposed to have.

It's a loss right now that we don't have that. It's not that diversity is the most important thing. It's that it witnesses to the truth and beauty and goodness of Christ. Not to have it is a loss, so I think we have to ask the question, "What is it going to cost us?" Just kind of write some things out. "What is it going to cost us to do this?" You guys already did that prior to me getting here. "What is it going to cost us?" Then let's move forward, man. Let's get the gospel out.

Nikki: I think at an individual level, we get serious about diversifying our friendship groups. I love, Matt, how at the top of every year, you kind of encourage us to look at our friend landscape and go, "Does everyone look like you? Do you come from the same background?" I think there is rich fruit in sharing stories all throughout the year and building relationships with people who are not like you.

I know here at The Village Flower Mound, we have people gathering, women at least (I know I'm in one), where we're completely different, eight of us, but we're coming to the table and saying, "I want to know you. I want to know your people, know your history." I would encourage everyone in here to kind of look at their landscape and go, "Where can I grow in this area? Who can I begin to engage with that is nothing like me?" so that when tragedy happens you're pressing in with someone you have relationship with.

Matt: Let me press. I think last time we really kind of looked at it, you're looking at 12,000 to 14,000 people at The Village Church. Maybe 300 or 400 of them are African Americans. That's such a big move forward from 10 years ago that I'm super encouraged by it and yet super depressed by it simultaneously. I feel like when I have that conversation every year, the push I get from both African Americans and whites is whites are like, "Where are they?" and African Americans are like, "Thirty-two people just invited me to lunch, and I'm a little freaked out right now."

Nikki: True story.

Matt: Yeah, it's a true story, right? I can see when I'm saying that, my African American brothers and sisters are like, "Oh my gosh. Here it is. Just a tidal wave of white invitations is about to come over me." How do we position in proximity? That's my question. There is something going on here that I'm trying to pull out.

I think what I'm trying to pull out is that now that the shops have been built here and everything is here, we just don't need to leave much anymore. When you don't leave, you don't know that two exits down from us, they don't look much like us at all, and their life experience hasn't been what our life experience has been.

The proximity piece is what I'm really trying to dig into. If we have any real shot at empathy that is a game changer, then some of us do need to move, and some of us do need to change where we work out and where we get our hair cut. Those are the kinds of things I'm trying to pull on because there's just not... We are so far away from even being close to being able to get in proximity with one another.

It's going to be one African American for every 22 white people. It's just going to be extremely difficult, but we have this community just south of us. This is back to your mission point. We just haven't figured out how to engage and aren't willing to engage, it seems, other than to maybe write a check, which, I think, fine, but to our shame, to not want to get your hands dirty.

Anthony: I would say (and you've said this often here lately) that we are not primarily thinking people, but we are primarily feeling people. Proximity is not just physical; it's emotional. It is the, "Let me read things that are stirring the hearts of my African-American brothers or, at the Dallas Campus, of our Hispanic brothers and sisters. How do I understand their world? How do I enter in and think about the way they're thinking? How do I begin to immerse myself in what is true for them that I haven't experienced?" I think it's physical primarily, yes, but also a deep emotional bonding to others.

Mike: There is just such a danger in Christianity becoming preaching points, just blog posts. Christianity is us being elect exiles here. Again, just to press on you with that, feeling this sense of, "I don't belong here in this world." Don't try to make a palace out of an outhouse. That's what I just

said in a sermon in Fort Worth. This world stinks. This is not supposed to be our home. Feel the weight of eternity. Feel the weight of the glory of God, and you have that.

We are demonstrating that. Live on mission to get that out. I just want to open up the conversation even bigger at that point and say we're not just thinking about African American, blacks, things like that, but just in general. Christian, think of yourself that way. Don't set up shop here. Just make your way through quickly. Live for the glory of God and for eternity alone. That's it.

Matt: That's good. Let me tell you how I want us to kind of start to close out our time together. Anything else before I do that that you guys want to say before I kind of try to turn us to maybe some responding?

Rob: Yeah. Guys, we love you, and we're grateful to enter into this wrestle with you. It's nasty. It's ugly. It's hard at times, but it's beautiful. The Lord is sanctifying us more to the image of Christ. Be with us. Labor with us. Wrestle with us. Let's do it together.

Mike: Thank you. I talk about emotional proximity, and I feel bonded to your heart because you take the time to create this space and care about this deeply. Thank you.

Matt: Thanks, Mike. Thank you. All right, guys. Thank you. One of the things I wanted to address as I turn our attention more toward responding to what we've heard today is the stream in which we reside in evangelicalism... Because we're children of modernity we've been taught that the life of the mind is primary and what we feel or what we sense or what we're really wrestling with in here has to be filtered and checked by the truth.

Listen. I don't want to take anything away from that reality, but I think that I have learned over time in pastoral ministry that for anyone to be able to heal they must be able to express how they feel and have that feeling be met with empathy and compassion, not an explanation about why they shouldn't feel that way.

I don't know if you're married or not, but next time your wife is upset with you, brothers, try to explain to her why she shouldn't. Use the rational argumentation about why she shouldn't be upset with you, because of this and this and this, and, "You're wrong because of these facts."

Anthony: It doesn't go well.

Matt: It's just not... You should respond feeling to feeling, fact to fact. When someone shares a feeling with you and you confront that with fact, what you're saying to the person that stops them from being able to heal is, "What you're feeling doesn't matter," and that can never be true. Now, what we're feeling might be misinformed, and that's where the truth gets laid on top of that.

There is a time to be angry and to be afraid and to be confused and to be calloused. What I want to do is I want to move out of the head and now into the heart and talk about what we're actually feeling and do some business in that space, as opposed to intellectualizing everything, not that I'm anti-intellectual, because I'm certainly not. I think these issues are rooted in history. They're rooted in systems. They're rooted in government. They're rooted in all of these things.

We have to know those things at some degree to be able to have any shot of moving this thing forward. Yet, to acknowledge today that, "Hey, man, I'm really angry," to acknowledge today, "I mean, I'm afraid," those are good things for us to be able to admit and to be able to minister to one another in those spaces.

I think as I've watched my own emotions this week, I think I have felt anger, like legitimate hot rage, like to fistfight someone anger on multiple occasions this week, and I felt deep sadness this week. I think in both instances, those feelings were justifiable. How I thought we would end our time is by allowing the Holy Spirit of God amplify our ability to feel deeply the mess we're in by being really honest about how we actually feel.

One of the ways it's helpful to kind of help that empathy begin to grow in you is to think about just some facts that are true right now. Here are some facts that are true right now. There are five police officers' families who are in church this morning. Many of them had young children. One of them had just been married two weeks ago. The carnage that has been left behind there is heartbreaking. Five men who made less than \$50,000 a year, who chose to, according to Romans 15, restrain evil for the good of society, are dead. They're gone.

They've left mourning children. They've left mourning spouses. They've left mourning friends. They're dead, and there's a 4-year-old little girl out there who watched her daddy bleed out and gasp for air before his life left him. Right now, she exists, a 4-year-old little girl trying to process that. Right now, there is a 15-year-old boy who is heartbroken and doesn't understand what just

happened to his daddy, who has seen a video of his dad being slammed to the ground, pinned to the ground, and then shot multiple times.

These are real people who exist. When you and I shift gears into wanting to know all of the facts and, "Well, that wouldn't have happened if..." instead of just lamenting, it shows that there is something broken in us. It shows that something has gone awry in us. Christian Smith, who I love, is a sociologist professor at Notre Dame. He said, "One of the greatest divides in America is between the way black evangelicals and white evangelicals see the world."

The chasm is not so much even in our society as much as it's in our church. Per Anthony's point, where the church can demonstrate empathy, understanding, and togetherness here, we have a shot. We have a shot. Here's what I want to do. I want to ask you to trust me. If you're a guest here today and are just like, "Listen, I've just been here an hour. I don't trust you," I can live with that. Don't trust me at all.

Here's what I want. If you would be so honest as to just confess, "Hey, Matt, in all of this, I just feel anxious and fearful." If that's you, would you just raise your hand? "I just feel anxious and fearful, a bit confused, afraid." Okay, now here's where I need you to trust me. Would you just stand up? If you just raised your hand and said, "I'm anxious," would you just stand up where you are? You don't even need to feel embarrassed by that. You just stand up where you are.

Now, here's what I want to do. If you're sitting down, and that's not an emotion you're feeling, you don't feel afraid or anxious, you're feeling something else, I'm going to do one other one after this. What I want to do is, in our position of privilege, I want to pray over these brothers and sisters the peace of God, the peace that passes all understanding, that fear would be driven out, and that love would replace it.

Here's how we do that at The Village. We're a bit Baptistical, all right. We're going to gather around these who are standing. We're just going to lay a hand on them. That's not voodoo. That's not magic. That's us saying, "We're with you." We're going to pray out loud that God would establish peace in their hearts." I'm going to ask you even now, will you gather around these who are standing and just lay a hand on them?

If all of this is too much for you, then feel free to just stay seated, but if you would be so bold, would you lay a hand on these brothers and sisters? Here's how I would ask you to operate, that you

would just pray out loud for these brothers and sisters so that your prayers out loud might encourage their hearts.

The good thing about our King is that he will not get confused about what is being said here. He will hear every utterance and every utterance of the heart. He will hear what we should pray and don't know how to. We begin to pray out loud for these brothers and sisters. You take it from here. You pray for them for just a moment or two.

Father, you know it's scary to be us. You are sovereign. You know all things. We are limited in scope, limited in understanding. Your sovereign plan in your divine essence makes sense and is beautiful and good and right, but to us here, it feels broken and scary. To the spouses of our law enforcement officers, it feels terrifying. To our African-American mamas and daddies, it feels terrifying.

We pray, Spirit of God, that you would bring peace to our hearts. We pray you would bring rest to our hearts, that love would drive our fear. We ask you to do this because this is not some sort of intellectual game. The mind feeds the heart, but the heart must be softened to hear what is true. Will you soften us? Stir up love in our hearts. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Thank you. Why don't you go ahead and have a seat. I want to do one more because I think on top of hearing this week fear and anxiety and confusion, I think probably the most consistent emotion I've felt and heard expressed this week is the emotion of anger, of rage, of wanting a vengeance, of being just really angry and not really knowing what to do with that.

If you would be so bold, would you just confess, "No, no, no. It's not fear. I'm furious. I'm angry. I can feel boiling in my blood." Let me say this about anger really quick, and then we'll see if more of you will be honest. The problem with Christians and anger is that somewhere along the way, Christians have forgotten that the Lord actually commands us to be angry.

We have taken Jesus in our day and age and made him kind of Tinker Bell with a little pouch of fairy dust who never gets upset, who is not the same Jesus that flipped over tables and drove people out of the temple, who isn't the Jesus who rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for how they oppressed and put heavy chains on people.

When you make Jesus Tinker Bell you don't have category for Christian rage, but Paul clearly tells us. In fact, it is a command in Ephesians 4. "**Be angry, but do not sin.**" Why? Why are we to be

angry and not sin? Because vengeance belongs to the Lord. Because what the Lord has in store for evildoers is far greater than anything I would be able to do with my piddly human hands.

Maybe you're all swoll up and think, "Well, my hands..." No, no, no. What God has in store for those who oppress and for those who happily participate in injustice is a far worse wrath than anything human hands can divvy out. We trust that justice belongs to the Lord. It doesn't mean we don't act. It doesn't mean we don't move. It means we are freed from needing to exact vengeance because our God will.

He is gracious. He is a healer. He is merciful, and he will slaughter the oppressor, and he will destroy and disembowel, according to the Scriptures, those who happily participate in injustice. So we get to be angry because it's right to be angry and trust that God will extend grace and forgiveness and heal, leading to repentance or he will justly with rightly judge. In that space, we get to sleep.

If the emotion that has just kind of been driving in your heart and in your head, the one you've been trying to wrestle and fight with has been anger or rage, I want you to just stand up for me now. We want to pray for you and pray kind of the same thing, pray the peace of God over your life, a confidence in God's righteous indignation against those who would oppress and unjustly harm.

We're going to do the same thing now. Let's gather around these brothers and sisters of ours and lay a hand on them. Again, maybe this is your first time here. Maybe you don't want anybody's hand on you. You are completely free to go, "All right, I hear what he's saying. Don't put your hands on me," and we won't put our hands on you. This is just what we do. In time, you'll let us. This is first date stuff. It's not time. Later.

We want to pray for these brothers and sisters the same thing, that God would establish peace in their hearts, that he would heal that rage, that they could feel a release in trusting that God has vengeance in his right hand. Let's pray for these brothers and sisters of ours who are standing. Again, let them hear your voice. Pray for them out loud. Let their healing come from the Spirit of God through the prayers of his saints. Let's pray together.

Spirit of God, we just confess as the people of God that we are angry at the state of affairs this past week. We are angry at the death of these seven men. It seems like madness to us. We just want to cry out to you in just a raw honesty that we know you're at work in this mess yet we feel a sense of anger and rage, even just anger and rage, not even sinful anger and rage but justifiable rage.

We ask you, Holy Spirit of God, increase our confidence in your sovereign reign, God. Allow peace to wash over us. Let empathy and pity replace rage. Might we feel deeply the loss of our African-American brothers and sisters. Might we feel deeply the loss and the fear among our law enforcement officials. Might we see that the black and the blue have been pitted against one another in a type of broken system that really sees both of them emptied of the dignity due their humanity.

We just ask, Holy Spirit of God, do work in us as individuals, in us as a church for a time such as this. We need you. Jesus, we need you, not just for individual salvation, although we praise you for that, but make us your people. Thank you for these four brothers and my sister and so many more who have stepped into this place as a type of missionary where music isn't exactly what they would like and preaching is maybe a little bit different. Yet, they're here because they believe your truth, your Word. Bless them. Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.