

Not peace, but a sword - a reflection on Matthew 10:24-39

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Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

"The world's gone mad!" ...exclaimed one infuriated Facebook user on a post about the counter-protests in London which took place over the weekend. On this surface it does appear quite mad that we have had a series of protests and counter protests around the country in the middle of the most dangerous pandemic the world has seen for some time. You could be forgiven for thinking: 'now is not the time for this.' The truth: there isn't a good time. The reality: it is happening now.

Instigated by the death of George Floyd, a man who was black, at the hands of a police officer in Minneapolis, the protests have called for police reform in the United States, but also have been unequivocal in their message throughout the world that 'Black Lives Matter.' A simple message, hard to disagree with, yet a little more complex than first thought. It has exposed systematic and institutional racism, it has highlighted unconscious biases against people of colour. At home it has raised questions about our history of imperialism, empire and slave trading; seeing the statue of Edward Colston removed by protestors in Bristol, and graffiti on monuments and road names associated with slave traders and people who may have held racist beliefs.

Whilst we may want to comment on the legality of these acts, we can understand the reason and frustration behind them. There is still a problem of racism in our country. The BLM movement is seeking to make our communities more inclusive, safer and just for people of colour. This should be a positive and encouraging progression for us, nevertheless we have seen counter protests, violence, and mayhem.

Jesus message was one of love for the least and the lost. A call for all of humanity to treat others with love and compassion. If it was taken to heart by everyone, there would be no need for a Black Lives Matter campaign. Yet Jesus knew his message of love would not bring about peace to all humankind. He knew it would cause division in families and communities, he knew it would eventually bring about his death. He knew unity would not bring about positive change by itself, the change would bring disunion. Yet he knew that it was a change the world needed.

Lord, help us to be brave enough to change the world for the better, but help us to deal with the confusion and disunity that will come with that change. Amen