

Dear Church,

It is amazing how strange the times in which we are living have become. I admit that there have been weeks where I have been tempted to veer from my preaching schedule through Hosea to address some of the issues going on in our world but aside from comments here and there throughout my sermons, I have not dedicated any of our corporate worship time to directly dealing with how we should respond in the midst of a pandemic and more recently, to the civil unrest that is currently sweeping our nation under the umbrella of civil rights.

Culturally, the environment has become a powder keg of opinions, ideas, philosophies and even conspiracies. Well-meaning believers are caught in the middle wondering. "How should I engage the issues and what should I say?" The Bible has answers for both of those questions that I hope every member of Beacon Baptist Church will take to heart as they represent Christ and His church within their spheres of influence.

In regards to how we should engage the issues, the Scripture says, *"And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."* (2 Timothy 2:24-26) The work of changing the heart is God's business. And if He intends to bring repentance, He will do so in the context of the "kind", "patient", "gentleness" of His servants as they communicate truth in a loving and winsome way. Sometimes, despite our best intentions to "stand for the truth," we end up coming across as a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. Rarely is the unbelieving heart softened by verbal sparring. The apostle's words on this point are not stated as a suggestion but rather as a command. Does kindness, patience, and gentleness describe the way in which you are engaging the volatile issues of our time?

In regards to what we should say, I think the Bible is clear on that too. As a Bible preaching church, we are obligated to be the "pillar and ground of the truth" without reservation or apology. But in our personal world, in our neighborhood, and online, we must be careful that the truth we communicate on cultural issues (race, gay rights, abortion laws, etc.) does not undermine our ability to communicate the primary message which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified; because ahead of every political loyalty we hold so dearly, we have a higher calling to make Christ known. Paul said that he became all things to all men that he might win some (1 Cor. 9:19). This is not to say that we veil our views when asked directly but we avoid enflaming animosity as a means of trying to win people to Christ.

The apostle Paul said. "I determined not to know anything among you except Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). The message of Christ is our primary message. We believe that the Blood of Christ is the answer for every problem of man and society. We believe that reconciliation has already been won by Jesus Christ who has made all who believe to be one in Christ. We believe that forgiveness, freedom, and healing from every sin is found in Christ. We believe that the peace we so greatly long for will only be realized when Jesus the Prince of Peace rules upon the earth.

So, as you make your voice heard at this critical and controversial time in our country, I pray that the people of Beacon Baptist will be kind and preach Christ and Him crucified, and if they persecute you for the message of the cross, rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven!

For further reflection read: 1 Peter 3:15-17, Matthew 7:6, James 3:13-18