

Stan Greene
Address and Challenges to Marchers
Black Lives Matter Solidarity March
Douglas to Saugatuck, Michigan
June 14, 2020

Thanks, Becca,

First I want to thank you, for coming out, at risk of being exposed to one virus, so that you can combat another virus.

I was asked to come here today initially to offer a blessing. And, some of you know me and have heard me talk about being raised in a Baptist Church. When you've asked someone who was raised in a Baptist Church to give you a blessing, you're at risk of hearing a sermon.

I promise you there is no sermon coming today.

But what I will tell you is this. My faith tradition includes two roles that led the people. One is the role of Priest. The Priest speaks to God on behalf of the people. And when we are armed with the certainty of our actions, then we call on God to bless those actions.

There are times, however, when we do not have the certainty of our actions. Today is one of those times. We are here today not because we are certain of what to do, but because we are lost.

We don't know what to do.

And we hope that in coming together, we might jointly understand what it is to do.

And so in those moments the priestly invocation of God's blessing does not fit.

Which brings me to the second role. The second role is that of Prophet. The Prophet speaks to the people on behalf of God. Now, I don't deign to think myself a deity. But I will step into the prophetic tradition of Isaiah, and Amos, and Jeremiah, and... Martin to lift up a prophetic rather than a priestly voice. The prophetic voice is one of challenge.

Here is my challenge to you:

If you proclaim that "Black Lives Matter," and there are no black lives in your social circle, in your daily interactions, in the way that you walk through the world, then "Black Lives Matter" is merely an abstraction.

I cannot afford, and you cannot afford to live in a world of abstraction.

So my prophetic challenge to you today is twofold:

1. As we walk, reflect on how you might authentically expand your circle so that we might be in union with each other and in connection to others. So that your proclamation of Black Lives Matter might be an authentic proclamation of the life you live rather than a selfie and a T-shirt. That's my first challenge.
2. Your chants today might be encouraging. I would encourage you today as you walk, at your socially distanced 6 feet, to look into the eyes of someone and challenge each other. Find an accountability partner, TODAY, so that you can continue whatever enlightening occurs as you leave this place. And finally, my challenge: This time next week, if you have not spoken with, spoken for, spoken up, acted, learned, expanded yourself; if this day becomes an event on your social media timeline and not a part of a new awareness in the world. if this time next Sunday, nothing else has changed in your life, I respectfully request that you build a ceremonial fire, you take your sign, you take your t-shirt, you place them on the fire. And I ask that you call on God's blessing that someone else is courageous enough to stand up and do the work that you will not do.

Those are my prophetic challenges for all of us today, as we go forth from this place to create the Beloved Community that is our collective birthright. And like all of those who have a birthright, it falls us to take the actions required to claim that birthright.

I thank you for being part of this journey, and I trust that you have the will to respond to prophetic challenge, and make this day better than yesterday, and tomorrow better yet.

Amen, and amen.

