

Leaders 4Life – October 2020

A newsletter from Y4Life

Guiding Youth Toward Justice

by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life

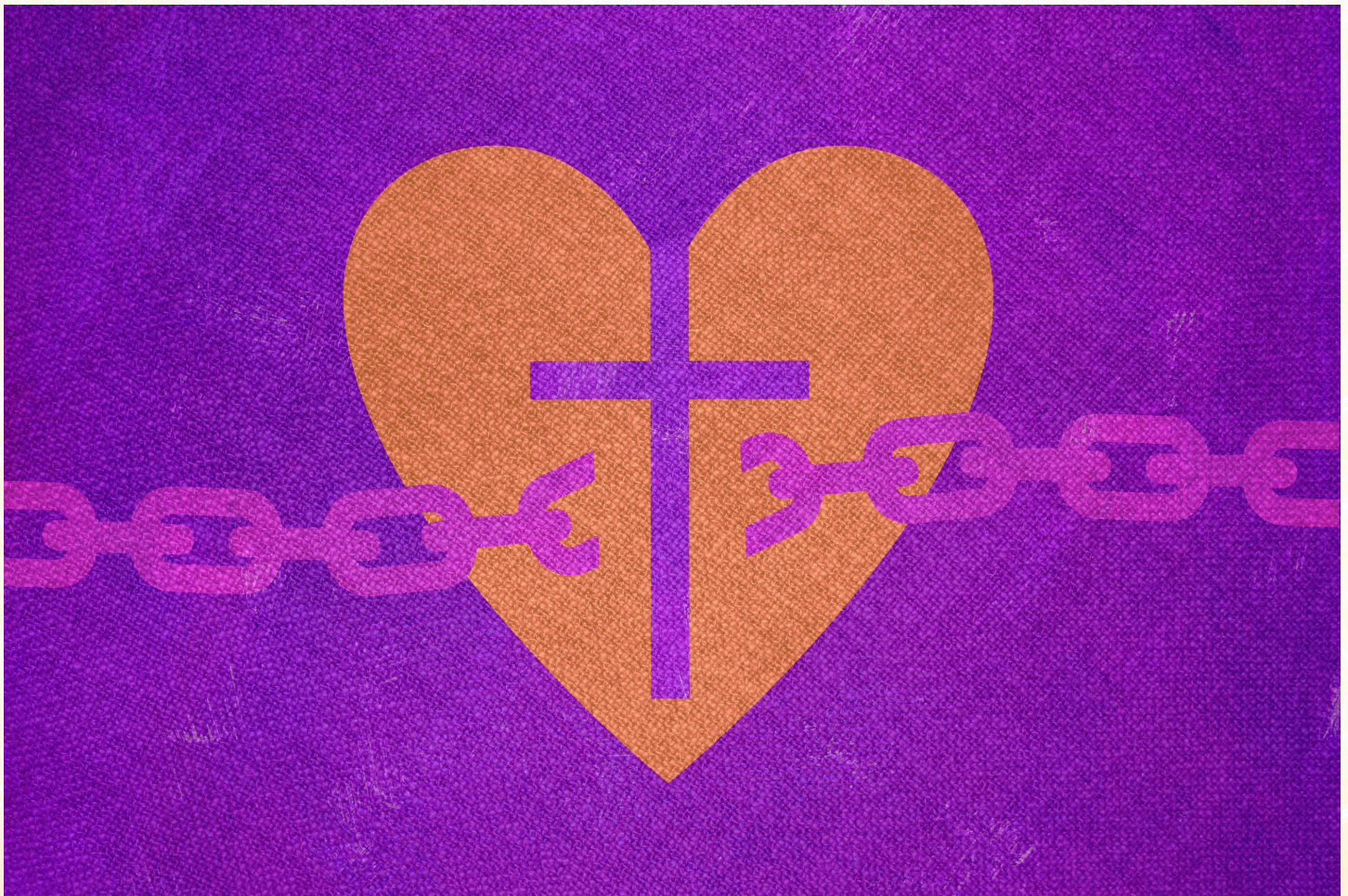
I've been thinking a lot about justice lately. I'm guessing we all have. It's a topic that resonates with people of all ages and races, all nationalities and cultures. In fact, the need for justice has been an underlying and unifying issue behind much of the world's news cycle in 2020 thus far. It can be seen in arguments for and against healthcare rationing, and it influences conversations about shutdowns, sheltering in place, and basic COVID-19 prevention. A desire for justice is foundational to the conflict between China and Hong Kong, and it shapes opinion on foreign exchange student mandates. Justice, in many ways, has even beget outrage over possible Tik Tok bans in the U.S. Say it isn't so!

Most obviously, though, the topic of justice has been a lodestone for racial tensions in America, drawing its citizens into discussion, reflection, activism and, in some cases, change.

Unsurprisingly, justice is a topic that also resonates powerfully with today's youth.

And you know what? That gives me great hope.

Despite social distancing, mask wearing, and good handwashing, I have had the pleasure of spending lots of time with youth the last few months. From the two youth who live in our own home to the leaders of various **Y4Life Teams**, the 60 (approximately) youth who have been active in **Chats 4 Life** and to those



I've had a chance to converse with on the phone, through email, or at graduation parties and weddings, my life has been filled with conversations about justice and injustice.

And those conversations have provided fertile ground for discussions about life.

What's made me hopeful is that the youth I've been talking to clearly recognize the connection between justice and preservation of life. More specifically, they ardently believe that being for life is not only the compassionate choice, but it is also the right choice.

Is there still work to do? Yes, there most certainly is. There's even work to be done among those who already understand that life is important.

For example, many 4Life youth know that taking an innocent life through abortion is a flagrant injustice to the unborn child. With a little guidance, though, they begin to see that abortion is a gross injustice to the mother and father and family as well—an injustice that often has long-term ripple effects.

Likewise, 4Life teens easily see how euthanasia is an act of injustice. But with guidance, they might also recognize that physician-assisted suicide and other forms of “mercy killing” are injustices too, injustices done not only to the individual dying, but also to the family, the nurses, and the very body of Christ whose call it is to care for another beautiful child of God.

And when 4Life youth recognize that justice was not served to a man named George Floyd, we adults readily admit that our world is full of despicable sins. We confirm that his life was valuable too, and we mourn his loss truly and deeply as God's beloved creation.

And when those same 4Life youth note that racism has played a horrendous role in American history, we agree that treating others inequitably because of the color of their skin is always wrong. We affirm again and again that God handmade all people and Jesus died for all people. And that means ALL lives are valuable and equally loved.

However, because we are people of life, we can do much more than mourn and bemoan our fallen state; we can provide hope. Once again, we can and should offer guidance, pointing to the only true source of justice in the world, God Himself.

Psalms 103:6 says, “**The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.**” That justice is never found in harming our neighbor or purposely causing division. It is never promoted by anger or hatred or vengeance. True justice can only be found in the gross injustice that was done to Christ on the cross. His innocence now covers our guilt; His blood paid the price for our sins.

Romans 8:1 reminds us that “**there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**” That means we have been set free from the sin that has imprisoned us, even if those sins are full of anger and vengeance or apathy and indifference. We now wear the righteousness of Christ, and through Him we are empowered to love, serve, and protect the lives God has placed in our paths.

And you know what? Sometimes those lives are the lives of our youth.

As Christian adults, we are privileged to guide, mentor, and care for youth—even (and perhaps especially) during times of uncertainty, turmoil, and unrest in our world and nation. We are privileged to look for ways to validate their concerns and lead them in the paths of righteousness. We are privileged to meet youth where they are and walk with them as fellow travelers on the road to eternity.

I know. Sometimes that walk can be difficult. Sometimes we don't know what to say. Sometimes the only way to serve is simply to love.

But you should know that you're not alone. **Y4Life** and **Lutherans For Life** have many resources available to you. From Zoom calls and programming to pamphlets and retreats, I'm available to help you meet the For Life needs of your students. Feel free to contact me at mbauman@lutheransforlife.org for ideas, resources, or a word of encouragement. I look forward to helping in any way I can.

In the meantime, I'll keep praying that God gives you both joy and blessing as you uphold and support the lives of youth in your community. And I'll keep rejoicing that through Christ, you are making an eternal difference 4 Life!



Remembering Our Roots

by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life

I've been reflecting on roots lately ... obsessing over them, if I'm honest. It all began last spring when I filled my herb tower with starter plants. Worried that the roots might not have enough room to grow, I added a few herbs to my flower beds to prevent overcrowding. It was definitely the right decision; by mid-summer, I was blessed with a bountiful harvest of garlic chives, rosemary, and oregano.

While sunshine certainly gets a lot of credit for growth, basic botany reminds us that there's just as much going on underneath the soil as there is above it. And when problems arise in a plant's life, it's almost always better for those problems to be happening topside. It's easy for a gardener to address a broken limb or an infestation of mites. There's a simple solution for a plant that's visibly thirsty.

But diagnosing a root problem is difficult to do. Root rot is almost impossible to detect until it's too late; it often requires trimming and transplanting into new, healthy soil. But because it's hidden beneath the earth, there's little hope for a plant under the care of a novice gardener.

Like plants, words have roots, too, roots that delve deep into linguistic history. And they carry with them layers of meaning and nuance, layers that often lie hidden beneath the soil of modern usage. When we forget these roots, sometimes rot sets in.

Let's take, for example, the word "justice."

By secular definition, justice definitely has connotations and shades of morality attached to it. Connected to legal proceedings, justice means administering both rewards and punishments that are deserved; it means adhering to a moral principle established by a higher order, and it includes good conduct and the act of treating others equitably.

By definition then, justice is something we should desire. In this kingdom of the left that God has established for our good, we see order and fairness and equality playing out when the government does what it is called to do. Because the world is full of sin, we need the kingdom of the left, and when the government promotes and establishes justice, we confess that the government is good.

But when the kingdom of the left doesn't serve justly, we have a vocational



obligation as citizens and as Christians to seek reform. We are called to protect and defend those unjustly accused, those unjustly harmed, and even more tragically, those unjustly killed. In fact, this desire to protect life because it is created by God and redeemed by Christ, because it is unique and unrepeatable, is foundational to the Christian 4-Life movement across the nation. It is foundational to you who seek to support LIFE.

Justice is, by nature then, both important and good. Perhaps even more interesting, though, is that the definition of justice doesn't end there. When we dig even further into its roots, we find that the very definition of justice includes not only moral rightness, but the quality of righteousness itself.

The quality of righteousness itself.

If that doesn't make us sit back and ponder for a while, it definitely should. We all know that by corrupted nature, our roots are rotten with sin. We are decaying; the ravages of sin cause our bodies, our words, and our relationships with others to fall apart. Like rotting plants, we need a gardener to save us. We need someone to trim our rotten roots and transplant us into healthy soil.

And that's exactly what God sent His Son to do—to pull us out of the deathly soil we were trapped in, to clip away our nasty, worldly, decaying roots and stymie our sure and certain death. God knew that our destruction was so deep, that after cutting it off, only blood could clot the wound. Only blood could restore life. Only the blood of His Son, Christ.

And Christ did it. He died so that we might live.

Romans 8:1-2 reminds us, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death,” and Psalm 103:12 assures us that “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

Christ received the punishment we deserve and gave us eternal life instead.

It was, in all measures of the word, the most unjust death the world has ever seen.

But thanks be to God that through this great injustice, Christ brought justice to the world. Now, like a gentle gardener, Christ daily uproots us and washes us clean in the waters of our Baptism. He transplants us into His rich soil of forgiveness and salvation, and He causes us to bear fruit, fruit that blesses the world.

We know that true and perfect justice will never be found in imperfect beings. It cannot grow from rotted roots. But we also know WHERE IT IS FOUND.

Psalm 103:6 reminds us, “The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.”

True righteousness and justice are only found in Christ.

Because our roots are planted in Him, because His blood now nourishes us, we are able to work for the good of others in the world. We can and do confess that all life is precious in His sight, all life is valuable, and all life has been redeemed. And we encourage our government to value lives, too, asking it to establish and continue to uphold justice, to provide equitable opportunities for all people, and to treat all people with dignity.

The last few months have given us ample time to reflect on our roots, ample time to reflect on the disease that seeks to destroy us. But it has also given us plenty of opportunities to remember where our roots belong. Paul reminds us in Colossians 2:6-7 that we've been replanted. We are now rooted and built up in Christ. We now walk in Him. Christ has become our justice and our hope.



Chats 4Life

Are you interested in discussing contemporary life issues with other high school and college-aged youth? Would you like to learn how to address those issues from a Gospel-motivated perspective? If so, **Chats 4 Life** is for you! **Chats 4 Life** offers young adults opportunities to connect via Zoom with other 4Life youth from across the nation. During these sessions, youth are invited to network, ask questions, and engage in discussion about contemporary life issues. Watch our Instagram page for the next **Chats 4 Life** opportunity, and contact mbauman@lutheransforlife.org for the latest meeting code and password!



Racial Theories Are Bankrupt but Killing Us

by James M. Kushiner, The Fellowship of St. James

I am not one, generally, to respond quickly to situations and challenges. But as events unfold, what patterns are emerging? ...

There are two things about St. James that also may be timely. First, he was known and respected for his pious life that featured constant prayer and fervent intercession for the people—he was on his knees so much they became “hard as a camel’s” as one translation puts it. Our society needs such prayers of the Church. Christians should consider a rule of prayer and fasting for the remainder of 2020.

Secondly, James lived on the cusp of dramatic change, uncertainty, and violence. His murder in AD 62, say some ancient commentators, marked the beginning of troubles in Jerusalem leading to the cataclysmic Jewish Revolt and the end of Judaism as the Jews knew it in AD 70 with the destruction of the Temple. The Christians of Jerusalem were strong enough under James’s leadership to survive—they resisted the pressures to join the ill-fated revolt and removed themselves across the Jordan while Jerusalem was engulfed in civil strife and military assault. James’s example of fidelity and insistence on real Christian obedience and not mere talk is more timely now than ever. Are we prepared for the worst? We should be. We’ve been warned to be ready to meet the Master on His return. There will be no excuses we can make.

Also, in a time of “racial” tensions and economically-inspired calls for the revolution of structures and systems, James’s razor-sharp denunciation of pandering to wealth and of making distinctions between believers is timely. My fellow editors have reminded me that “race” isn’t in the Bible, so what is “racism”?

Christians are to show no partiality whatsoever. My brother in Christ who happens to have more melanin than I have in the paper-thin upper level of our skin—while all the skin below the paper is the same—is not of a different race than I. So-called “race” is not even skin deep! That’s mere upper-skin coloring, not race. Varying levels of mere melanin indicate that we’re all coffee beans—some are blonde roast, some are medium or dark or espresso roast, but we’re all coffee, we’re all colored people.

Racial labels and theories, including supremacy, are the inventions of outdated “scientific” thinking. We’d do well to be rid of them all. Doing that will take time, but we should stop talking about race in this way.

We pray in our services for “the race of man” not the races of man. There is only one race. All else are ethnic, national, cultural, or other differences. We’ve past histories to trouble us to be sure—like the Irish and the English, the Jew and the Christian, the Greek and the Ottoman Turk, and the slave and the slave owner—but there is no place from which a genuine reconciliation can emerge today, except in Christ. The goal is fellowship, brotherhood in Christ.

Society should address every act of injustice and partiality based on ethnicity, and not allow politicians to use envy or “race” for election ploys. “Wisdom from above” is needed, says James, lest there be “wars among you.” Resist the calls to revolution and repair to the One who is able to bring all men together, at the Cross.

From Friday Reflections, www.fsj.org, 7/31/20.



I'm 4Life ... Now what?



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I'm 4Life ... Now what?



5 Steps to Becoming a Y4Life Messenger

I'm 4Life ... Now what?

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