

A Life That Matters

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I sit down to ponder some thoughts, it's my brother's birthday. Today, my brother Don is 59 years young. It's hard for me to fathom that I have a sibling who is just a few years away from retirement. I can't be that old can I?

Don and I have always been close. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that growing up he was my best friend in the world. Though a few years older than me, my big brother always went out of his way to include me in everything he did! In fact, with his very first paycheck he received as a teenager, Don bought his kid brother a brand-new bike.

Don has always had a big heart and I think I know what formed that heart. A couple of years before I was born, he was hospitalized with meningitis and almost died. Between Mom and Dad, there was never a single moment of a single day when Don was alone in that hospital. Day and night, around the clock, one of our parents was always with him keeping vigil at his bedside, while the other parent stayed home with my sister. Their son was sick and there was no other place for them to be, than by his side.

A long time ago, the Apostle Paul wrote these powerful words;

"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

What parent doesn't live out these words every single day? My parents certainly did. It's not that they somehow thought that his life mattered more than my sister's, but at that point in time, with his life in danger, Don needed more of their attention.

There are folks who need our attention now. In this tumultuous time of pandemic and protest, we have come to see folks of black and brown skin suffering higher rates of sickness and violence than any other community; we have come to see great suffering in communities of color enduring higher rates of poverty, mortality, incarceration, and violence. It's hard to share in the American dream when you're struggling to stay alive on the economic and social underside of society.

A friend recently reminded me that "Black Lives Matter" doesn't mean that Black lives are more important than anyone else's. It just means that right now, at this point in time, many of our Black and Brown siblings are hurting and suffering and need more attention. If we believe Paul's words about the Body of Christ to be true, then we cannot turn a blind eye to the suffering of our African American sisters and brothers. If we believe Paul when he says that when one suffers, all suffer, then we can't look at "Black Lives Matter" through partisan lenses. Instead we must ask how we can be part of the healing, holding leaders on both sides of the political aisle accountable for policies that hurt communities of color. *"If one member suffers, all suffer with it;"* If black and brown siblings suffer, we all suffer. Those are Paul's sentiments, not just mine.

My brother suffered and almost died from meningitis. At the height of his illness, Mom and Dad devoted every waking hour of their day to his well-being. At the height of his illness, he experienced their selfless, sacrificial love; love which in turn formed his own heart of selfless love defining his life ever since. Love always wins.

In the days and weeks to come, in the midst of pandemic and protests, may love define our lives, that all who suffer may know through you and me, that love always wins.

Peace and Love,
Pastor Doug