



‘Made in the Image of God’ by Rev Mandy Young



I am not sure who originally used the phrase, a picture paints a thousand words. I read somewhere that it was popularised in the 1920's as part of an insight into advertising campaigns. Whoever came up with the proverb, its truth was revealed to us this week in some extraordinarily disturbing, sad, provocative and occasionally inspiring images from one or other side of the Atlantic.

The first image to which I refer, and the trigger for the others, was that of George Floyd in Minneapolis, a police officer's knee in his neck. His death brought other images of mass marches in so many cities, of prostrate protesters, of the dignified taking of the knee, as well as the anger and anarchy of the looting. Then there was the strange, unsettling image of Donald Trump standing outside St John's church, Bible in hand, after protesters had been forcibly removed from the scene.

An image I would like to share with you is this one by Vincent Barzoni. It depicts Jesus Christ as an African American and around the central image of the Messiah as a bound slave, you have key scenes from the life of Christ, from the Nativity to the Ascension. The message is very simple to my mind – that in his divine essence which is love, God stands with the oppressed, whoever and wherever they are and whatever their ethnicity or race.

In Genesis we're told that God made human beings in his own image – a lot of ink has been spilled over what that phrase may mean, but it is not to be interpreted of course in any physical sense. God is not black or white, male or female. To be made in God's image means to be made to love, to be made to create. To be made in God's image means to stand against anything that is filled with or sourced in hatred and destruction. Racism, like sexism or homophobia, is antithetical to the nature of God.

And for all of the caricatures of God in the Old Testament as being cruel, and there are a few, closer reading always reveal his own righteous anger is rooted in response to the cruelty, hypocrisy, and oppressive relationships of human beings to their fellow humans. A picture paints a thousand words but sometimes the words do it on their own. From the Old Testament Prophet Micah:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

AMEN