



Love Transcends Hate
Holman United Methodist Church
August 13th, 2017
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A few days ago, I was in the city of Jaffe-- known in Hebrew as Yaffo—the ancient port city at southern tip of Tel Aviv.

This city is known for its diversity: Jews, Christians, Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, secular and religious people live together as equals in this place, in harmony... which is challenging for many in a region seething with polarization.

So a few years ago a group of extremists came to sow division and hatred in this precious town, to break the delicate balance. But neighbors took to the streets standing arm and arm to block the arteries of the town, saying, HELL NO! Not in this place. We reject your violent rhetoric; there's no room here for your racist screed.

They created a sanctuary of love and justice... which is precisely we have to do here. Across this country.

God, You know and see all things. But let me tell You what things look like around here from our vantage point these days:

Over the past several years, white supremacists have been invited back to the streets and the airwaves, into the White House itself.

This is not just a resurfacing of old bigotries, but a dangerous and deliberate fueling of white supremacist ideology, which, once uncovered, promised to wreak havoc on already deeply fractured nation.

In the Talmud (Gittin 55a) there is a dispute between Rabbis: what ought we do if a house, maybe even a palace, is built on the foundation of a stolen beam. One Rabbi argues: tear down that house to retrieve the beam and return it to its rightful owner. The other: pay the original owner the monetary value of beam. Let's call it reparations.

What nobody says: pretend—generation after generation—that the beam wasn't stolen at all. That the thief *is* the rightful owner.

Our country was built on a stolen beam.

White supremacy is our country's original sin. The legacy of slavery, the genocide of Native Americans, the exploitation of immigrants all remain unresolved.

Nobody here is suggesting that we dismantle the house. But what we can no longer do is ignore the stolen beam.

It's time to acknowledge, unequivocally, that racism remains alive and well in America. And that a culture of racism *is* a culture of violence.

Charlottesville represents what happens when racism is met with anything short of explicit condemnation. There's a reason white supremacists didn't wear hoods to march in streets this time. They didn't feel they had anything to hide.

It takes generations to heal racial wounds. It takes a few casual dog-whistles to reignite them.

Well now the Pandora's box of white supremacy has been reopened and reignited, and I'm afraid it's not going away any time soon. So it is up to us to stand together like the people of Yaffo—to resist and to persist.

God, give us strength as we stand together today, not only with words of condemnation and consolation, but as we recommit to the hard work of healing our country before we slide further into the abyss.

God, give us strength as we stand together today—white Americans with people of color, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist Americans, people of all faiths and none, immigrant and Native Americans, men, women and LGBT Americans—prepared to build a sanctuary: a political and social reality that reflects the American ideals of freedom, dignity and justice for all.

Oh Lord, prepare me
To be a sanctuary
Pure and holy
Tried and true
And in thanksgiving
I'll be a living
Sanctuary for You