



Pearls of Leadership Wisdom: Hope for Boundless Compassion

Welcome to my backyard and Pearls of Leadership Wisdom. Such a peaceful place here in such a juxtaposition of the events of the last several days, and I'll be honest, I debated about whether I should actually record a message this week or not. With the murder of George Floyd, with the peaceful demonstrations, with the riots, with the looting, with the burning of parts of Minneapolis, with some of the acts of compassion, with the anger and the pain that I saw around me, I decided that being silent was not an option.

I was moved by a quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer who said, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil." So while I don't have solutions or easy answers, I do have a few thoughts to leave you with. I often hear people ask the question, "Why are they doing this?" I can't help but think that we got the question wrong. If we could rephrase the question and ask, "Why are these things happening in the world," then we'd have the opportunity to see what we are doing that is part of the problem, and what can we collectively do to solve it.

I'm reminded too of a quote from Mother Teresa that has impacted me in the last few days: "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." As a psychologist, a mom, a grandmother, a mother-in-law, a friend, a colleague, a boss, there are many people who are depending on you and me to remember that we belong to each other.

This morning I listened to a podcast, insightful and to some degree uncomfortable, by Emmanuel Acho. And in it he began with the premise of how his white friends ask him, what can I do to help? And his answer came back in his describing the kind of oppression that he and others have dealt with for years, but with a plea for listening, compassion, and education. It was a beautifully done message and reminded me that silence has two parts to it.

One part of silence is taking the opportunity to speak up. The other part of silence is taking the opportunity to ask, listen, hear, and understand. We are being asked to counter our silence and to be silent at the same time. So don't be silent about what you see, but do give your gift to silence, so that you can learn, hear, understand, and show compassion. It is through showing our boundless compassion that we will all be able to move closer to each other and erase the margins and the boundaries that separate us.

As Father Greg Boyle said in a commencement address on boundless compassion, "Compassion isn't just about feeling the pain of others, it's about bringing them in toward yourself." May we all have the courage to bring others in towards ourselves during this difficult time. Thank you.