

Fighting Oppression (Men vs USP Tucson)

During difficult times, there comes a period where you must stand for something, even in prison. The assumption that society has about inmates is that they are all evil, inferior and devoid of rights.

This, of course, is not true. But left to believe this, mankind will, by their nature, devolve to barbaric treatment of others, based on the ideology of a superior over an inferior being. Sadly, society and our world hasn't fully learned from this, though we do have reminders.

For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, has designated several sites for "events of universal significance". Here are two such examples:

The first is the island of Gorée, off Senegal in West Africa, a memorial of the horrific treatment of Africans from the 1500's to the 1800's. Off this site, 20 million Africans passed through, headed for a horrible life in slavery. Such an oppression is a reminder of man's inhumane treatment of another.

The second is Auschwitz Birkenau, the infamous German Concentration and Extermination Camp from 1940-1945. Over one million Jewish people, tens of thousands of Polish victims, and others, were executed. As quoted in the 7th Edition World Heritage Site book of 2015, "evidence of this inhumane, cruel and methodical effort to deny human dignity to groups considered inferior, leading to their systematic murder", was why this site was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979.

Sadly, oppression continues in many forms, even in prison. Now, I cannot fairly compare the inhumane treatment of what the Africans and Jewish people went through, to the inhumane acts done in prisons like USP Tucson. Prisons aren't putting inmates in small cells, chaining them to the wall by their neck and arms, with 150-200 people in a room for months, before sending them as slaves (if they lived) overseas.

But, during a COVID-19 pandemic, to force inmates to work, and threaten those who refuse with punishment in a dangerous cell, is still inhumane. To put these men at the highest risk to catch the Coronavirus, by having them work around staff that don't wear their face masks half the →

time, is inhumane. Yet, this is what is going on.

But I say to that Psalm 103: 6, "The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed".

And of course, prisons aren't putting people in the gas chamber, and experimenting, torturous experiments on inmates like they did at Auschwitz Birkenau, but officers and staff do in fact use similar tactics, a policy of spoliation, degradation and humiliation, all inhumane treatment. They lack only extermination in wide fashions. Yet in USP Tucson's poor practice of protecting inmates during the COVID-19 pandemic, research shows of July 2020, the infection rate for prisoners is 6 times greater than the most infected country in the world - the United States. (Federal Defenders of NY BOP COVID-19 Charts & Graphs 7.08 page 3, July 14th, 2020).

But to this I say that Psalm 146: 7 says of God, "who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry, the Lord gives freedom to the prisoners".

In each scenario, the oppressed were made to feel less than human, and the oppressor felt that their victims were guilty or unredemable. Africans were seen as inferior because of their skin color, the Jewish people because of their faith, and prisoners because of their sentence and charge. But anybody can validate superiority over anyone, it's easy to create a reason, but it doesn't make it right. Surely, in humane treatment by officers in prison, simply because they can hide behind the Bureau of Prisons, in actuality makes them no better than the Nazis, who mass murdered over a million people, or the slave traders, who made untold wealth selling 20 million people to slavery.

Oppression, in any form, is still oppression.

But, to fight it, we must take a stand. We must trust God, and simply refuse to give up. Just as Berea and Auschwitz, as well as prisons like USP Tucson, each display evidence of the worst of man, there is also evidence in the midst of these places, the best of mankind, those who fight against oppression.

As long as there's humanity - and faith in God - we can beat oppression, as long as we never give up.