Charlottesville VA

– that tragedy is not about the statues – not fundamentally.

Fundamentally, as with the conflict over the confederate flag

– the conflict is over two mutually exclusive principles.

**The one principle is that the white race is superior to all others**;

**only the white race is truly, fully created by God as human.**

All other races are somehow less than human, and therefore to be

* subjugated,
* enslaved,
* oppressed,
* excluded,
* and denounced.

**The other principle is that human beings of every race, language, creed, gender, and skin color**

**– all human beings**

**--are lovingly created by God**

**and therefore are of equal value,**

**equal worth, equal significance,**

**equal importance in the world God creates for all of us to live in.**

These two principles cannot coexist.

Therefore, wars are fought and violence erupts when they clash.

When one group claims superiority over another,

they rebel against God who created us all and they must be resisted.

**White nationalism is sin against God’s good creation.**

As those who know the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ,

we must at every opportunity speak for the equality of human beings and **the love of God for all people**.

It was the clash of two such principles that forms the plot of the Joseph story in Genesis.

He’d had some dreams about his brothers bowing down before him, a great man – and they didn’t like it.

They didn’t like to think of themselves as less powerful than Joseph,

less significant, less worthy of love.

So, when they saw their father Jacob showing favoritism toward Joseph, they rebelled and became violent against Joseph.

If we just get rid of him, they believed, life would be perfect.

**What they didn’t realize, is that God likes to turn the tables on our human perceptions.**

* God likes to knock down a peg those who think they are better than others.
* God likes to bring special attention to those who are trampled underfoot.
* God likes to make vulnerable those who are smugly secure and prosperous
* And bring the poor into a place of safety.

**Joseph’s brothers did not know that God would even things out again;**

That God would put them in the position of being unworthy of food and life

and having to beg from the very brother they had wanted to be rid of.

**And then, it is Joseph’s chance for revenge.**

He had the power to make his family starve.

He had the power to withhold the precious grain that would sustain their lives.

He had every reason to make his brothers pay for what they had done to him.

**But Joseph served the Lord God and knew God’s loving plan.**

So, he did not take revenge

– Joseph did not do violence against his brothers

– **He did as God does for his wayward people**

**– he had mercy.**

…

**You know, we make God really angry when we sin.**

God is angry with his people about Charlottesville, and Australia, and Barcelona;

And about our own little judgments about other people,

* whether they deserve food and clothing,
* encouragement and support,
* or whether we are better than they.

We may not understand why people with cigarettes, jewelry, and cellphones are standing in soup lines and claiming welfare.

But we are not better than they are because we can afford to buy our food, and cigarettes, and cellphones and jewelry and don’t have to stand in lines for food.

**No – Jesus has died for the sins of all and rose to give life to all without exception.**

**Every person is valuable and cherished.**

**Every person is worthy of God’s love.**

Joseph is an image of Jesus. Joseph shows the mercy of God toward sinners.

**Because of his mercy, Joseph and his brothers are reconciled –** they looked in each other’s eyes and saw equals,

worthy, valued and cherished.

Joseph wept and they all embraced one another.

**This is the power of forgiveness.**

**The strength of mercy.**

This is what God does for us each time we confess our sins to God;

each time we receive the body and blood of Jesus

to sustain our life.

God weeps with joy at our return to him and embraces us in deep love.

But there is even more to God’s mercy, as Joseph shows us.

Joseph did not just send his family back to Canaan with their grain, for the remaining 5 years of the famine.

Joseph secured a home for them in Egypt.

Goshen – a fertile land where they could continue to live as farmers.

*“Bring everything you have with you, he said, so that you and your household, and your flocks and herds will not come to poverty.*

**Joseph gave his people a home just as Jesus prepares a place for us in the heavenly realm of God the Father.**

God’s forgiveness and mercy change our circumstances now, but also change our destiny.

**When we live in forgiveness and grace, our destiny is where Jesus takes us.**

When we rebel against God and seek only our own ways,

When we do violence to others with words or weapons,

When we pretend to clash about statues and flags when really it is about who is a human being worthy of our respect and love,

Then our destiny is with the master we serve – Satan.

For we will each be judged according to our hearts.

So, let us examine our hearts to see whether there lurk notions of superiority and merciless tendencies,

Desire for violence or hatred of others.

And finding those dark corners,

**let us nail them to Jesus’ open arms on the cross.**

**Let us see them die with him.**

And then, vulnerable, with hearts wide open,

let us receive our dear Lord’s tears of joy at our repentance

and his arms wide open in embrace

as he gives us himself in bread and wine.

For we were lost, but now are found; were blind, but now we see –

**Now, we see Jesus in the eyes of each other person and are moved to mercy and love for them.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen