

April

“The cross and the lynching tree interpret each other. Both were public spectacles, shameful events, instruments of punishment reserved for the most despised people in society. Any genuine theology and any genuine preaching of the Christian gospel must be measured against the test of the scandal of the cross and the lynching tree. 'Jesus did not die a gentle death like Socrates, with his cup of hemlock....Rather, he died like a [lynched black victim] or a common [black] criminal in torment, on the tree of shame.' The crowd's shout 'Crucify him!' (Mk 15:14) anticipated the white mob's shout 'Lynch him!' Jesus' agonizing final cry of abandonment from the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mk 15:34), was similar to the lynched victim Sam Hose's awful scream as he drew his last breath, 'Oh, my God! Oh, Jesus.' In each case it was a cruel, agonizing, and contemptible death.”

— James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*

Holy One, We know that you are the Maker of all.

Your hand, your spirit, your glory is reflected in the beauty of your creation, vast in its manifestation of size, shape, color, and personality.

Each body blessed with the task of opening our eyes to seeing you from a different angle. We are perfect in the ways our flesh carries the wonder of your creative self-revealing.

Black bodies are sacred.

Brown bodies are sacred.

White bodies are sacred—and yet... We acknowledge O God that white bodies, though created in goodness, have collectively become reflections not only of you—not only of Love, or Justice, or Compassion, or beauty—but also of a system of violence, power, fear, and greed reigning terror upon others. White flesh bears testament to white supremacy.

God of resistance, and justice, and righteous anger, make those whose bodies have become signs and symbols of white power, make those who benefit from the powers and privileges of its terror, hear your call - your demand to live, speak, pray, and organize against every manifestation of white supremacy.

Hold accountable all who let you down by letting down their black and brown siblings through apathy or fear or lack of action or selfishness or refusal to own compliance in the violence of it all.

You call all of us to show up.

Help us show up.

May we all show up, and may those who are white seize every opportunity to reject each false proclamation of supremacy made upon their skin. It is the responsibility of those who are white to proclaim - in word and in action - over and over and over:

white supremacy is a lie.

Fill all your people who are committed to resistance with strength and courage and ground them in assurance that in bearing testament to Justice and Love and the belovedness of black and brown bodies - you are there also.

Hold tenderly all who are afraid.

Weep with all whose hearts are ripped open by each act of violence or injustice. Rage with those who wish to tear down every word, structure, and symbol of racist power.

Give us each the discernment to hear what you would have us do - today and everyday going forward until all your people are free.

May courage, care, solidarity, peace, and righteous anger manifest in all of us. Amen.

(from "enfleshed," a community and online resource that seeks to provide individuals and communities with spiritual and theological resources for liturgy, prayer & contemplation, preaching, teaching, and consulting that speak directly to what matters the most.)