

November 25, 2014

Dear Grace Church Family and Friends,

I knew it. I just knew it.

Last night, I was watching television, waiting for the grand jury's decision in the Michael Brown case, and when the announcement finally came, I have to say: I was not surprised. In fact, I expected it. Several days ago, as it became clear a decision was forthcoming, I told my wife there would be no indictment. Call it intuition. Call it a sixth sense. But, I knew it. I just knew it.

I felt that way because it seems like police officers are rarely indicted in cases like this. Plus, local and state officials were taking such extraordinary measures to prepare for the decision – it seemed like they knew there would be no indictment. I mean, would it be necessary to call out the National Guard if an indictment was to be handed down? Probably not.

Now, I know the elected officials had no clue what the decision would be, and they were only doing what was necessary to be prepared and ensure the safety of citizens. In other words, they were only doing their jobs. But still, it seemed suspicious to me.

And, if I thought something was suspicious, I cannot blame anyone else for feeling that way, nor can I blame anyone for feeling angry or frustrated.

In his remarks following the announcement, President Obama said that we have come a long way in race relations, and I believe that to be true. Yet, at the same time, I am not sure recent progress is enough to wipe away a history of systemic racism. Respect and trust must be earned. And, we have not done enough in this country to earn respect and trust, between white and black, between police and the communities they serve, between those who govern and those who are governed.

I am not sure what the answer is, or how we move forward toward forming a more perfect union, except to say, I think the first steps must begin with us, as individuals. Systemic problems surely require systemic solutions, but as we all know, changing laws does not change hearts. We need to change hearts – how we look at each other and feel about each other. We need to build respect and trust. And, that begins with us.

As Christians, we commit to striving for peace and justice among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being, seeking and serving Christ in all persons and loving our neighbor as ourselves. I know I fall short of that sometimes and resolve to do better. Starting today. And, I ask God for help, opening myself to the power of God's forgiveness and love:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence  
and take not your holy Spirit from me.*

What are you feeling in the aftermath of last night's decision?

See you in church,  
Andrew