

Uproars and Action

April 30, 2021 Scott Gunn

Why are the nations in an uproar?—Psalm 2:1

The psalmist asks a question that is disturbingly relevant for our time. Why are nations in an uproar? Why are people in an uproar? On the right day, I might find myself asking why my own life is in an uproar.

The answer to this perennial question is, of course, sin. We quarrel, rage, and rebel because we choose selfishness and evil over sacrifice and love. It was no different when the psalmist wrote. Verse 11 of the same psalm has the solution. “Submit to the LORD with fear, * and with trembling bow before him.”

It’s good advice, really.

If we think about the matters over which we get into an uproar, a pattern emerges. We quarrel and rage because of racism and sexism and other human-created manifestations of fear of the other. We quarrel and rage as we fight over natural resources or material goods that we perceive to be scarce. We quarrel and rage because we simply don’t want to take the time to know and to love our neighbors.

The church needs to show a better way in word and deed, raising its voice in the public square and shining as a radiant example of moral goodness and principled behavior. The church’s members need to do the same. That’s you, and that’s me.

Our leaders in the church sometimes ask, “Why are the nations in an uproar?” as if there’s no way of knowing, nothing to do. But we know the problem, and we know the solution. We just need the moral courage to do and say those things that are right.

We can name evil when we see it. We can stand in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized. We can make sure our own practices are in line with our values. To get very specific, we could choose to ensure that people who work in the church are compensated without a gender bias. Some of the work we need to do is intangible and difficult to measure, but this one simple step is clear, achievable, and measurable. There are plenty more where that came from.

Sometimes priests and bishops are silent when moral leadership is required for fear of those who will be upset by straightforward moral teaching. Speaking as a priest, I know that I need to “submit to the Lord” rather than submitting to my own feelings of fear.

It’s easy to take crucial questions and create a moral quagmire in which we paralyze ourselves into inaction. But we can do better, and I think our risen Lord expects it.

Why are the nations still in an uproar?