

The weariness and the harvest (Galatians 6:[1-6], 7-16)

It is easy to become weary after another officer-involved shooting of a young black man.

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Recently, in Memphis where I live, there was another officer-involved shooting of a young black man.

The response has been a gushing outpour of emotions, conclusions, judgement, and lament. Major news outlets compete with individuals' social media posts and live videos to share the story of what has happened. Communities, leaders, witnesses, and loved ones all battle for the narrative.

I have seen stories like this one roll across my news feed every so often for years. It has been a while since it happened so close to home, on a street I drove down days earlier, in a familiar community that is both beloved and maligned in the same breath.

"Let us not become weary in doing good," writes Paul (NIV). It is easy to become weary in moments like these. We have been down this road before. We will wait for the facts, slowly dripping into the public realm like drops from a leaky faucet. We will muddle through the grief, pain, anger, suspicion, despair, and even the forgetting when the news cycle shifts again. Having become numb to the stimulation of another reported death, we will struggle to find the faithful response and the courage to live it out.

The admonition against the pull of weariness is prophetic. Doing good is complex and must be navigated—when and how to show up in neighborhoods that are hurting, to take a particular stand, to try to reconcile the various opinions of people of faith or to refuse to. I'm thankful for Paul's warning that we might get tired even when we're busy doing the right things.

I am also thankful for what follows: "for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." I am reminded of those before us who doggedly stood for the good, who fought for righteousness, who refused to give up on justice. I'm reminded of long-ago heroes like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and A. Philip Randolph—people whose tenacity we benefit from now.

I am encouraged as well by more recent history, like the faithful activists and organizers in St. Louis who refused to remain weary even years after Michael Brown's death and the Ferguson Uprising. After four years, their good work produced a harvest in the form of a new district attorney—one who rose up from the movement, chosen by informed and engaged citizens. I am encouraged by the faithful activists and organizers in Chattanooga who have created a bail fund—to prevent people from having to stay in jail because the bail is more than they can afford—even as they continue to push for an end to cash bail.

Their witness joins these words from Galatians as food for the journey of activism, organizing, and daring to hope for the good.