

## Daily Devotional, December 2, 2021 Growing in Wisdom, Seeking a Gracious Spirit

***See how the faithful city has become a prostitute! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her—but now murderers! Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water. Your rulers are rebels, partners with thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them. Isaiah 1:21-23 (NIV)***

There was a time when I would skim over Scripture passages that didn't seem pleasant to me during this supposed "holly jolly" Advent season. After all, who wants to hear about once faithful people losing their way to the point where God's wrath is invoked? I don't ignore these passages anymore. Maybe it's a sign that I'm growing into the wisdom that I heard comes with age. While I can't be certain of possessing such wisdom, I'm certain that Advent is not a time to skim over the evil and injustices of this world. If anything, Advent is a time to face the darkness, holding on to God's promised light. And as we confront the injustices, we must remember to have a gracious spirit, moved by God's own spirit.

Chris Singleton, a former professional baseball player who played briefly for the Chicago White Sox, has a gracious spirit. His mother, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, was one of the "Emanuel Nine"—the men and women who were killed in the June 2015 shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Amid the bloodshed, the world not only learned about each of these people, including Chris' mom, who was said to have a deep faith and a smile that lit up a room. The world also learned what forgiveness looks like, as family members spoke words that exalted love over hate. Sadly, as grim as this terrible event was, it would certainly not be the last act of violence against people of color in the United States.

Seeking a way to honor his mother and to keep a conversation going on how important it is to set aside differences, Chris, on the fifth anniversary of this horrible shooting, released a children's book titled, "Different." The book shares the message of the importance of love and unity, and how we need to celebrate each person's uniqueness. Chris Singleton isn't ignoring the evil in the world but is seeking a gracious spirit in dealing with the injustices of the world. May we all join in seeking that spirit as well.

***Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus, your Son, who modeled for us the power of forgiveness as he died for us on the cross. Help us to remember that we are all standing in the need of grace, and that the greatest gift we can give during this Advent season is to find ways to elevate love over hate. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.***