

Christian players frustrated by criticism for anthem protest

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Eric Reid and other Christian players who support Colin Kaepernick's social justice movement want believers on the opposite side of the controversial anthem protest to ask themselves a simple but powerful question: What would Jesus do?

Reid joined Kaepernick, his former San Francisco 49ers teammate, in kneeling for the "The Star-Spangled Banner" last year because he wants to be a "voice for the voiceless," a lesson derived from a Bible verse found in Proverbs. The 25-year-old safety-turned-linebacker said he has discussed faith with Kaepernick, who remains unsigned.

"It's the foundation of why we started doing this," Reid told The Associated Press on Oct. 29. "We all have a love for people. The Bible tells us love your brother as yourself so that's why we're doing it."

"We have to speak up for those who can't do it for themselves. My faith is ultimately what led me to start protesting and it's what continues to drive me. Faith without works is dead. I feel like the past year before we started protesting, the Lord has prepped me for this moment."

Reid made the decision to kneel following a meeting with Kaepernick and former Green Beret and Seahawks long snapper Nate Boyer. Kaepernick initially sat for the anthem before his conversation with Boyer. They chose to kneel because they felt it's a "respectful gesture."

But the movement has drawn heavy criticism as it continues to envelop the NFL. President Donald Trump exacerbated the situation earlier this season when he suggested team owners should fire any players who knelt during the anthem.

Kaepernick, who led San Francisco to consecutive NFC championship games and one Super Bowl, filed a complaint that team owners colluded against him because of the protests, which are aimed at raising awareness for police brutality against African-Americans and other issues.

Reid said he's "baffled" that



AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File

In this Sept. 10 file photo, San Francisco 49ers safety Eric Reid kneels in front of teammates during the playing of the national anthem before an NFL football game against the Carolina Panthers, in Santa Clara, Calif. Reid says his Christian faith is the reason why he joined former teammate Colin Kaepernick in kneeling for the anthem.

some people misconstrue player demonstrations as being protests against the anthem itself, or the American flag, or the military or police.

He's especially frustrated by Christians who lash out against the players.

"I do see some hypocrisy with the people that call themselves Christians," Reid said. "If you know Jesus, he went into the house of God and turned over the tables and was angry and said they made the house of God into a marketplace so I would say this is something that He would do."

But the issue has been so divisive that Christians can't agree.

"This is not about black, white, brown, red or yellow; it's about respect for the country and its flag, which symbolizes we are 'one' nation under God," said Joseph Bruce Sofia, senior pastor at Gloucester County Community Church in Sewell, New Jersey. "The national anthem speaks of oneness and not division; it speaks of hope and unity, of poverty to wealth, from the ghetto to the Presidency. The Biblical principle of sowing and reaping is in effect here. Sow discord and we'll reap discord. Oppression is a horrible thing, and needs to be taken on head-on, but take it to the town hall or courts or social media but, in my

opinion, using the national anthem during a football game draws a line in the wrong sand."

Carl Lentz, the lead pastor at New York City's Hillsong Church, said many people, including Christians, are ignoring the real issues.

"What we see right now in culture is what's easier? To make this about a flag, which it's never been about, or to actually say, Colin, what's your beef? What's your passion? What's going on?" Lentz said. "Our country has a sad history of missing the mark, missing the moment, and deflecting issues. To judge this guy for putting his career on the line for something he's passionate about, I do not understand. It's sad."

Baltimore Ravens tight end Benjamin Watson, a strong advocate for social reform, said he's disappointed when Christians put "politics above the gospel, empathy and understanding."

"We talk about what Jesus would do. Let's think about that," said Watson, who has been standing for the anthem. "How should I Biblically look at this situation? Is my response as an American going against what my response should be as a Christian? If I'm a Christian, I want to delight in the things that (Christ) delights in and those things are blind. They're not based on color, creed or money."

LIMEY PASTOR

Crimes of power



COLIN BROWN
Faith

One of my choicest sermons (that I wrote and liked) was entitled the "Commandments of Jesus," and dealt with many of the commandments that Jesus left us in the New Testament and sayings thereof.

We study little of these as Christians, I discover. We should pay attention to the Lord's words and warnings. One of the most severe of these, of his, was this:

"But whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6, American King James Version.)

As you may know, there is a currently a fellow who is angrily denying allegations against him of abusing young girls and using his high office in law in luring them to his imaginative solitude. This man, well-known for his faith, is known for hanging the Ten Commandments in his courtroom to show the world his own virtue and "closeness" with the most high. Unfortunately for him, he has not so much emphasized the text from Matthew quoted here. Jesus was way on track with this and one can sense his indignation and fury at those who make prey of the little ones.

I do not believe that being a member of the clergy or a member of the legal profession, or the political profession or the cinematic position, makes it less likely for these crimes to occur today. I think it makes it more possible for people, parents and guardians to let their guard down. For some reason the wolves in sheep's clothing still get past the shepherd. It is a *modus operandi*. The target of these wolves with darkened consciences is the little one who has no power, no voice. Children seldom sue.

Where I studied at one church, the current pastor told me that the pastor before him had been accused of molesting young family members, and the pastor prior to that one had also been accused of the same thing. He wanted me to know the rocky history of the church even though I never heard this from any of the existing congregation members.

There are many churches that have such a history. Also schools — one of my son's school principals was accused by many parents of having fondled their daughters. Nothing surfaced in the news, but strangely enough this youngish man developed a serious cancer that felled him in the year after this had been uncovered.

As a boy, I myself remembered my scripture teacher's offer to drive me home and, when I accepted, made attempts to mess with me in

his car. I moved away from his attentions. I was about 11 years old but got away from him. I have retained my suspicion ever since.

A priest I knew here in the USA was accused of having molested five young men. Another priest I knew was withdrawn from his work as a chaplain for a similar reason. The stories about each staggered me.

From what I knew of them it seemed so unlikely.

A journalist friend of mine in Europe in investigating matters from the Second World War found a large archive, a cache, of birth records of babies born to young unmarried girls, fathered upon them by the clergy and their upkeep paid for by the churches of that region. As you may know, the *Boston Globe* has unveiled the shabby secrets of these lost children in a large way.

I do not think that sexuality is an enemy of prayer or virtue, but I do firmly believe that people can get themselves into massive amounts of trouble in denying a relationship with God's early commandment to "Be fruitful and multiply" — in an appropriate way. One cannot try and strangle one's own God-given propensity, but one must learn to take it. One cannot suppress humanity; one must guide it under the advisement of law and compassion for the other.

In my view we need to treat our own selves like dangerous weapons and really understand our own impulses while guarding the persons of those in our charge. The same types of people are included in all of these tales of criminal conduct: teachers, pastors, doctors, trainers — people who share much intimacy and blur boundaries. They should be examined most carefully.

One woman I knew had been molested by her karate coach in her early teens and she never disclosed her pain to even her parents. She has suffered ever since and she is still suffering now in her later years.

So I don't have much of a good outcome for this story. I just say to you all: Be warned of all hidden enemies concealed behind the sheepskin. The devil himself wears faces that look kind and trusting yet are ready to pounce and bite. These are dangerous territories.

Among the 12 of Jesus' friends there was one truly bad apple. If that statistic holds, we are in a world of hurt.

I pray that while we are here on this troubled earth we will keep our eyes open and defend the lambs from the wolves. It takes a village to guard a child.

Amen.

Colin Brown is the former pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Boardman.

BRIEFLY

Kids Klub hosts party

MILTON-FREEWATER — Youths in fifth grade and under are invited to participate in games, prizes, holiday crafts and watch a movie during a Kids Klub event.

The Fall Fun Party is Sunday from 3-5 p.m. at the First Christian Church, 518 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater. In addition, snacks will be served. The Kids Klub regularly meets each Sunday

at 9:30 a.m. for arts, crafts, music and more.

For more information, call 541-938-3854.

Heppner church announces Thanksgiving meal

HEPPNER — A free Thanksgiving community dinner is being coordinated by the

Elohim Covenant Church in Heppner.

The public is invited to the meal, which is Thursday, Nov. 23 at 1 p.m. at All Saints Episcopal Church, 140 Church St., Heppner. Those attending are asked to bring a salad or dessert to share.

Also, volunteers are still needed to help serve and clean-up after the meal. For more information, call Melba at 541-626-1732.

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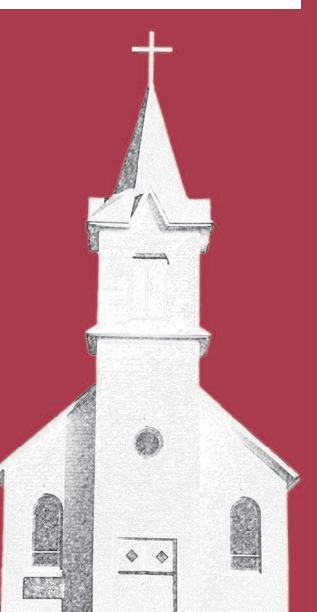
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