



**June 5, 2026 FRIDAY  
GRIND**

**Sometimes Life Stinks/  
Love Anyhow**

There are certain phrases I hear or read frequently that annoy me. One phrase is this: “in our troubled times.” It seems to imply that other times in the past were not troubled or, at least, not as troubled as our times are today. Other phrases are “in our polarized times,” “our violent times,” “our uncertain times,” or “our unprecedented times.” I am *not* denying the polarization, violence, and uncertainty of our times. And I even acknowledge that in *some* ways our times are unprecedented. But we do ourselves (and our Christian faith) a grave disservice if we think we are the only human beings who ever lived during “troubled times.” That’s why I believe a basic familiarity with history is essential for us to get a much needed perspective on our current times.

Take **polarization**. If we view Ken Burns’ incredible documentary on the American Revolution, we will learn how deeply divided the colonists were on declaring their independence from England. Neighbors argued with or even fought against neighbors over this issue.

**Violence and uncertainty?** Read first-hand accounts of the Civil War and you will see unimaginable violence and terrifying uncertainty. And wasn’t the Great Depression “**unprecedented**” for the people (such as my grandparents and parents) who lived during those times? And what about **World War II**?

Most historians describe those times in words such as these: “World War II was the largest, deadliest, and most destructive conflict in human history.” It took the lives of 60-80 million people—most of them civilians! Virtually every human being on earth was somehow impacted by the global devastation of that war—whether you lived on an island in the Pacific (think Pearl Harbor) or in Timbuktu in West Africa. If we think our times are unprecedented, we might be tempted to throw a “pity party,” for ourselves, moaning, “Poor us! No one ever had it so bad!” Or we might try to escape from our awful world. Several “escape hatches” are readily available. One is denial: “Things aren’t as bad as they seem.” Well, unfortunately, **SOME** things ARE as bad as they seem—or maybe even **WORSE**. Or we can try to escape the pains of our times through addictions to such things as alcohol, other drugs, gambling, the internet, food, shopping, gaming, social media, and work. Ironically, even religion can be used as an escape hatch: “I don’t care about what’s happening on this earth. I’m thinking only about getting to heaven!”

To escape from the real world is not only impossible, it is tragic. Why? Because, our faith teaches us that human life is a gift from God. And we believe (as I’ve said before) that “**REALITY** is God’s home address.” That means God is with us in our times. Even more, God is alive and active in whatever times or circumstances we find ourselves. But God is with us not simply to console or comfort us. God is with us urging us to get involved with the troubles of our day.

How? By calling us to ever greater love, goodness, justice, and care for one another in our real world. To illustrate what this involvement looks like, Jesus himself gave us a few concrete examples in Matthew 25:31-46: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the ill, visit the imprisoned.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man who became deeply involved in one of the primary “troubles” of his day, a trouble that continues to plague us: the injustices spawned by deep-seated racism. King once said this about Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan. When the Levite and priest saw the wounded man by the side of the road, they asked themselves, “If I stop and help this man, what will happen to *me*?” But the Samaritan reversed the question. He asked, “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to *him*?” King labeled the Samaritan’s decision and subsequent actions as “unselfish sacrificial loving.” It is the kind of loving Jesus showed throughout his life—especially on the cross.

Sometimes this “unselfish sacrificial loving” is dramatic and newsworthy: think Mary saying “yes” to God at the Annunciation... the early Christians being slain in the Colosseum, and countless other unselfish loving people such as Francis of Assisi, Abraham Lincoln, Mother Cabrini, Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa. But often this sacrificial loving is less dramatic—yet no less real:

The young couple welcoming a new baby into the world—despite our “troubling times”... Parents or grandparents who are doing the daily hard work of raising children... Teachers enthusiastically devoted to their students... Medical professionals caring for the ill among us... Scientists in their labs doing vital yet often tedious research to improve the quality of life.... The woman who just donated a total of 20 gallons of blood... Pastors responding generously to the many needs of their parishioners... Married couples remaining faithful to each other “in sickness and in health”... Picketers peacefully demonstrating for their neighbors who are being treated unjustly... Retirees volunteering for years with Meals on Wheels... Lawyers doing pro-bono work for the poor of their local community... And the teenage boy who mows his elderly neighbor’s lawn in summer and shovels her sidewalk in winter—for free. (She repays him with cookies and brownies!)

So rather than lamenting the times in which we find ourselves, let us ask ourselves, “Where can I help? How can I help? *Whom* can I help?” And also ask, “If I do not stop and help this man, this woman, this child, these people, what will happen to *them*? And consequently, what will happen to *us*?” I agree with the words of Bishop Michael Curry who spoke at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Megan Markle in 2018. In essence he said, “Only unselfish, sacrificial love has the power to heal us and change our world for the better.”