

Daily Readings

Please note: For the next two weeks we will be looking at the differences between Islam and Christianity. This week the sermon deals with the emphasis of each of these religions. Islam focuses on the submission of one's life to God. Christianity focuses on the grace and forgiveness that comes to us through Jesus Christ. These passages focus on the sacrifice of Jesus and the love God has for each of us. The daily readings allow us to dig deeper.

Monday November 8 – Read Matthew 16:13-20. This passage includes a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples, where the question of Jesus' divinity as the son of God is clearly established. The Quran stands in direct opposition to this. "So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three"—Cease! (it is) better for you!—Allah is only One God. Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that he should have a son." (Surah 4:171) As such, the Quran directly questions and refutes the divinity of Christ. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God – fully human and fully divine? How does your life and actions show this belief?

Tuesday November 9 – Read Ephesians 2:1-8. In this part of Paul's letter to Ephesus, Paul speaks directly to the free nature of God's grace. "**For by grace you have been saved through grace, it is not any of your own doing, but a gift from God.**" Islam teaches through the Quran that the only way to achieve God's pleasure is to submit to a strict adherence of rules and laws. Christians believe the law comes from God as a protection. We do not need to earn God's love. God loves us while hating our sins. Do you know how much God loves you? How have you shown God your appreciation for that love today? Are you still trying to earn God's love?

Wednesday November 10 – Read John 3:1-21. The most well known passage in the Bible is included in this reading. "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.**" This passage spells out the depth of God's love for us. No other religion comes close to the affirmation God gives us through His death on the cross. We do not deserve God's love; God gives it freely. The Quran teaches Jesus did not die on the cross; instead Allah saved Christ — a respected prophet and teacher, but not a savior — from death on the cross. How have you shown your devotion to God today? Does your belief in Christ as the savior of the world affect your decisions and actions?

Thursday November 11 – Read Philippians 2:1-11. In this passage from Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, the apostle instructs his followers to worship Christ. This does not mean Christians believe in more than one God. God is known through the actions of Jesus and the Holy Spirit — but God, Christ and Holy Spirit are three in one, not separate from each other. God is one and over all things in heaven and earth. How will you show your worship today?

Friday November 12 – Read Acts 4:1-12. In this passage, Peter and John have been arrested. Peter defends himself by claiming the salvation of Christ. "**There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortal by which we must be saved.**" Peter also states that Jesus will be rejected, but this rejection in no way inhibits the power of Christ in this world. Jesus still remains the "cornerstone" of our faith and the basis of our true relationship with God. In what ways have you rejected Christ in your life? Are you willing to accept the forgiveness and life that he offers you today?

Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.

God is doing great things through the ministries of Trietsch.



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, November 7, 2010

Islam — "Grace or Submission" *(Week 1 of 2)*

Romans 5:6-11 — The Word from the Bible *(New Revised Standard Version)*

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Scriptural Basis — Romans 5:6-11 *(from Interpreter's Concise Commentary)*

This talk about God's love is not pious fancy. There is concrete evidence of it in what Christ did, in his devotion to men and women without scrutinizing their merit. Human experience provides no parallel to what Christ has done even for the ungodly.

The reference (Romans 5:9) to Christ's death suggests to Paul the thought of justification by blood. This has past and present reference. Paul now adds a future reference – the certainty of not having to experience the final wrath, that is, retribution, here thought of, not as in 1:18, but as connected with the ultimate judgment, as in 2:5.

To be reconciled is the same as to be justified. Paul's usage always implies our need to be reconciled to God, not God's need to be changed at all in the divine attitude toward us. Justification is not a judge's acquittal so much as a parent's welcome. Reconciliation brings in the idea of reunion with the life of the family.

Islam

Islam is one of the three great, mono-theistic religions of the world that are descended from Abraham. (The Arab world is considered descendant from Abraham's oldest son, Ishmael.) "Allah" in Arabic is the same God as "Jehovah" in Hebrew and "God" in English. Muslims worship the **same God** as Christians and Jews, although the three religions have different understandings of what God wants from His creation.

The Prophet Muhammad began receiving visions from Allah (God) when he was 40. He established the religion called Islam in 622 AD, after a series of revelations given to him by the archangel Gabriel, which he wrote in the Quran. Muslims believe Muhammad was not being called to launch a new faith, but rather to clarify, codify, and most importantly – purify the faith first revealed to Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus. (The Old and New Testaments are considered holy revelation, however, human involvement in their keeping reduced their initial purity.) Jews and Christians are considered "People of the Book." Muhammad is not considered a god, nor is he worshipped; instead, he is the last of the prophets and holy messenger. His life is an example other Muslims try to follow (*sunna*, or his way).

A Muslim is a person that surrenders, submits and obeys the laws of almighty God and through this submission, attains peace and security (salvation) for themselves. Islam is the religion; a Muslim is the person. There are approximately 1 billion Muslims, accounting for 21 percent of the population, and Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world.

Allah is transcendent and cannot be compared to humans or any other created thing. His character is revealed through 99 Arabic names, the most common being, “The Merciful” and “The Compassionate.” Allah is never described in human terms, such as “father” or “son.” His will for mankind is obedience and worship, not relationship. On Judgment Day, those with the best chance are those who live lives of righteousness and submission to Allah’s will.

The **Seven Major Beliefs** are — Allah is one with no partner; angels bridge the gap between Allah and humankind; 124,000 prophets have been set by Allah to reveal the Divine Truth (Muhammad is the final prophet); holy books are the Torah, Psalms, Gospel and Quran; all will stand before Him on the Day of Judgement; Divine Measurement (*qadr*) means whatever Allah decrees will come to pass; life after death (very developed theology of heaven and hell.)

The **Five Pillars of Faith** are the ways in which Muslims show their submission to Allah.

- Belief (*Shahadah*) — The single most important part of being a Muslim is confessing one’s faith. If you recite the *Shahadah*, and believe it in your heart, you have become a Muslim. “I bear witness to this truth. There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet (servant/slave).”

- Prayer (*Salat*) — Muslims pray five times a day, kneeling and facing Mecca. (Takes less than 10 minutes).

- Fasting (Sawn) — Fasting during the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset for discipline and self-control.

- Charity (*Zakat*) — Muslims must pay their “purity of wealth” to the poor and needy once a year.

- Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) — All Muslims physically and financially able are to make the trip once in their lifetime.

Next week, we’ll discuss the Islamic worldview and Muslim society.

Similarities between Islam and Christianity

Muhammad uses the name Allah in reference to God. **Allah** is the same in Arabic as **Yahweh** is in Hebrew. The Quran refers to the same God as the Old and New Testaments. It points to the importance of the Law given to Moses and the teaching of Jesus.

In the book of Mary, the Quran tells of the birth of Jesus. He was born of a virgin to be a messenger of God. Many of the New Testament teachings are included in the Quran. Jesus is considered a miracle worker and one who ascended directly to be with God. Jesus is to rule in heaven with God until the final judgment when he will return.

Primary Differences between Islam and Christianity

The differences lie in the divinity of Jesus and his crucifixion. The Quran denies the divinity of Jesus. Jesus was just a man, though a very holy, special, messenger of God. The crucifixion is explained as an illusion. While Jesus was ascending to be with God, someone similar to Jesus took his place to be crucified.

So What?

We may worship the same God, but our emphasis and our beliefs about that God are ultimately different. Our understanding of the divinity of Christ, His crucifixion and resurrection changes how we view God. Muhammad believed the only hope of humanity was through submission to God through a standard of actions and requirements. As followers of Jesus, we believe the only hope of humanity is through the grace of God offered through Jesus Christ.

The crucifixion of Christ is the ultimate expression of the sacrificial love God has for all. Only God can love to this extent. This kind of love bridges the gap between God and us. We cannot do it on our own. No moral code or ritual system can bridge that gap. Godly morality may be the best and most life giving way to live. Rituals may connect us with the transcendence of God. These rituals may enhance and develop our spiritual life and relationship with God, but they are incomplete without the full revelation of Jesus as the full Son of God, crucified for us and raised on the third day in victory over death.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God. We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying. ***Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!***

The following are the two most widely used affirmations of the Christian faith. The Apostles Creed, an early statement of Christian beliefs, is commonly used in the United Methodist Church. It can be found in the hymnal #881. The Nicene Creed was adopted in the city of Nicaea by the first ecumenical council in 325 AD.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living
and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
Who with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic* and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Apostles Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord:
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of
God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge
the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

* *catholic* in both creeds refers to the universal church, not the Roman Catholic church.