

# Daily Readings

*Please note: Last week we looked at the basis for the two great religions of the world: Christianity and Islam. For the Christian, the basis is the grace and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ. For the Muslim, the basis is total submission to God through ritual and a strict set of laws and requirements. This week, the sermon deals with the motivation for our actions. Islam focuses on fear and the coming judgment associated with the failure to follow God's demand for submission. Christianity focuses on the call of Christ to love God and love neighbor. We love because God has first loved us. These passages focus on God's unrelenting love that is poured out for us and the call to carry that love out to others. The daily readings allow us to dig deeper.*

**Monday November 15 – Read Luke 10:25-37.** Luke is the only gospel that shares with us the story of the Good Samaritan. Matthew and Mark include the great commandment in their writings of Jesus' teaching, to love God and love neighbor. Luke shares the great commandment with the story of the Good Samaritan as an illustration of our love for others. Who is my neighbor? Not just those like me or those whom I like— to be neighbor includes all people even those who are different or despised. Today as you drive to work or school, ask yourself the question, "Who is my neighbor?" How can you show God's love for all those persons you pass along the way?

**Tuesday November 16 – Read I John 3:11-24.** John is describing in careful detail how love is put into action. Simply put, in verse 16, **"We know love by this that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another."** How are you laying down your life for another? God calls us through Jesus Christ to lay down our lives for all. What is standing in the way of this sacrificial love in your life? Count those for whom you would die. Will this list ever expand for the sake of Christ? Will you pray this week for the strength to love as Christ loved us?

**Wednesday November 17 – Read I John 4:7-21.** The source of love is God. We can not love sacrificially without the presence and help of Christ. To be in Christ is to love as Christ loved us. Verses 7 and 8 are a call to this extravagant source, **"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."** None of us have arrived at this level of faith. What steps are you willing to take to worship, to study the scriptures and to serve in order to grow in your expression of love? What one thing will you do this week to show your love for God and others?

**Thursday November 18 – Read I Corinthians 13.** Read this passage at the beginning and end of your day. Have you loved in this manner? Have you been patient and kind or have you been envious and boastful? Have you insisted on your own way? Have you been irritable or resentful? Examine your motivation for each action you take. Have you done it out of love?

**Friday November 19 – Read Luke 6:27-36.** The law of love is difficult for us to understand. How can we love without putting ourselves at risk? Jesus gives us the instruction, **"Do to others as you would have them do to you."** These are wise words. Verse 32 goes even farther, **"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them."** At the end of the day, how has the law of love directed your day? Have you done unto others as you would have them do unto you? Have you done it out of love?

**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 14, 2010

### Islam — "Love or Fear" (Week 2 of 2)

**Matthew 22:34-40 — The Word from the Bible (New Revised Standard Version)**

**When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"**

**He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."**

**Scriptural Basis — Matthew 22:34-40 (from Interpreter's Concise Commentary)**

The questioning of Jesus now passes from the Sadducees to the Pharisees. Their question, which seems to have been raised often by the rabbis, is: Which is the great commandment in the law? In reply, Jesus links together the commandments to love God (Deuteronomy 6:5) and to love one's neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). The rabbinic interpreters of the law seem to have done this. What was new was not the content of Jesus' teaching on this subject but his redefinition of what the love of God was – how it manifested itself, and who one's neighbor is. In this expansion of the horizons of obligation, as well as in the way of life that accompanied and exemplified his teachings, lay the revolutionary, new element of Jesus' ministry.

### Islam and Christianity

Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of Church of the Resurrection United Methodist Church in Kansas City, writes in his book *Christianity and World Religions*, "Of all the religions of the world, Islam may be the most important for Christians to learn about, next to their own faith. Today, our world is experiencing a clash of cultures with the Islamic world in ways, and for reasons, that we simply do not understand. Many Christians have little knowledge of the nuances of Islam and its beliefs. If there is to be peace in the world, it is very important that we as Christians come to understand our Muslim cousins."

Last week, we dealt with the major beliefs of Islam and what Muslims call the "five pillars," the primary practices or disciplines of the Islamic faith. Further, we looked at the similarities and differences of Christianity and Islam. To summarize, in Islam, God is reached only through submission to a strict standard of behavior and disciplines. Christianity, on the other hand, is based on the grace offered to us through the sacrifice and victory of Jesus Christ through Jesus' death and resurrection. In other words, while Muslims believe they are saved by their deeds, Christians believe we are saved not by our works, but by the eternal work of Christ.

This week, we take a deeper look into the more controversial issues of the Islamic faith. In most cases, these are modern developments that have arisen out of the radical philosophies of only a few Muslim leaders. The question at the heart of this discussion is – **What is the appropriate Christian response?**

As Christians, our actions are motivated by the Great Commandment of Jesus to love one another (found in Mat-

thew 22). We seek a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This relationship is based on of God’s love for us. Further, we are called by the words of Jesus to love others as God has loved us.

The motivation of the Muslim comes from a focus on the fear of retribution and punishment from God. The entire focus of one’s action as a Muslim is based on the desire to receive the reward of heaven at the end of this life. Submission and obligation is stressed in order to receive God’s mercy.

**In all my experience and reading, the vast majority of Muslims fall into the moderate category. They are passionate about the practice of their faith, but for them, the practice of their faith does not include violence. The violent, radical Islam has risen out of the late 20th century thought is the belief of only a small minority Muslims. The Quran condemns all aggressive warfare and teaches that the only just war is a war of self-defense.**

## ***Haddith and Shari’ah Law***

The *Quran* (the Islamic holy book, the revelation of God through His angel Gabriel to Muhammad) is shorter than the New Testament and includes very few laws — only about 25. The *Haddith* is an extended work of the sayings and life of the Prophet Muhammad. The *Haddith* is contained in volumes and includes conflicting stories and saying of Muhammad. It includes the cultural application of the *Quran*. Shari’ah Law is primarily taken from the *Haddith* and therefore different in each culture depending on how much of the *Haddith* is recognized and upon how its writings are interpreted.

The *Quran* is to be taken literally without any interpretation. It is not to be read in any other language but Arabic. The *Haddith*, on the other hand, is much argued and interpreted. For this reason, Islam is more diverse than Christianity. For example, Shari’ah Law differs from one nation to the next, based on the culture and practices of the people. There is no one understanding of Shari’ah Law.

## ***Infidel***

*Kafir* is the Arabic word that is often translated “unbeliever” or “infidel.” Neither is accurate. The Kafir or infidel is one who knowingly rejects, opposes or conceals Islam, even though they know it to be true. Muhammad used the term to describe those of his own people who had rejected and forced him out of Mecca.

In fact, the *Quran* provides protection for the “people of the book” — those of the Old and New Testament. The *Quran* teaches that religious diversity is not a reason for conflict, but rather an opportunity for working together for good actions.

Modern radical Muslims justify their actions — which are contrary to these teachings — by claiming that the world is Muslim and those who do not follow its teachings are “rejecting, opposing, and concealing the truth.” Therefore, anyone who does not claim the teachings of the *Quran* are considered infidel.

## ***Jihad***

This term *jihad* is mistakenly translated “holy war.” The Arabic translation is literally “to struggle” or “to strive.” It has come to mean the defense of Islam while it originally meant the purpose of protecting the territory, people and holy places of Islam. On returning from one of the early wars, the Prophet Muhammad said to his followers that they had returned from the lesser holy war to the greater holy war. The greater jihad is the inner struggle against everything that prevents Muslims from living in obedience to Allah. Once Muhammad had established his rule in Mecca, his teachings turned to the inner struggle of Jihad. He taught peace, tolerance and humane treatment of all.

In the 18th century, a puritan sect called the Wahhabis was started by Muhammad ibn Abd at Wahhab. The Wahhabis rose during the western colonizing of the Middle East. Wahhab and his followers saw the western expansion as a threat against the Islamic way of life as they defined it. Their extreme beliefs were primarily rejected by most of the Islamic world. His only converts were the Saudis, which became Saudi Arabia in 1932. Saudi Arabia still continues to practice the most extreme forms of Shari’ah Law including dismembering, execution by stoning, and the extreme oppression of women. All of these are condemned by most other Islamic nations and are not included in the Shari’ah Law of any other Islamic nation.

In the 20th century, Mawdudi in Pakistan took Wahhabi’s beliefs to a new level. He proclaimed that the growing

secularism of the west was a threat to Islam. Mawdudi argued that jihad was the central tenet of Islam. This new Jihad must be carried to the west as a literal battle for the faith. This was a new idea and contrary to Quran teaching.

The real founder of Islamic fundamentalism was Sayyid Quth, who was greatly influenced by Mawdudi. Following the establishment of the nation of Israel, he began to preach a violent jihad. The encroachment of the west was now a reality in his mind. He proclaimed that the entire world was to be Muslim. This was a new development in Islamic thought and a move away from the tolerance taught in the Quran. Quth justified his philosophy and its divergence from the Quran as a necessary move to protect Islam from evil. Everyone then that did not agree with Islam was considered to be an infidel. He was imprisoned by al Nasser in Egypt for his violence against Muslims who did not agree with him. The Muslim Brother, which had been formed earlier, took hold of the teachings of Quth and even after his execution in 1966 continued to proclaim this new form of jihad. The Taliban, who came to power in Afghanistan in 1994, were influenced by his ideology. Osama Bin Laden was a disciple of Quth, and although the events of September 11, 2001 were in every way a violation of everything for which the Quran stands, justified his actions by identifying the west and in particular the United States evil and therefore disposable.

## ***So What?***

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that the radical violent strains of Islam are as small as the radical violent strains of any other ideology. Primarily, Islam has become the tool of violent men to justify violent action. As Christians, we must resist the temptation to lump all Muslims into the same camp as these violent men who victimize women and children for their own purposes.

***What is the appropriate Christian response?*** We are called to love our neighbor. Jesus defined neighbor as those who do not always look and act like we do. This would include our Muslim brothers and sisters. A future with peace is a future where we stand shoulder to shoulder with those of the Islamic faith who hate violence as much as we do.

Adam Hamilton ends his chapter on Islam with these words, “I would be proud to call a Muslim friend or a neighbor. We share much in common with Muslims. Yes, there are critical points where we disagree. But we will never help Muslims understand the significance of Jesus Christ if we cannot first let them see his love through us. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, Paul says, ‘we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us.’ Our calling is to be ambassadors to all people, but especially today to our Muslim cousins. What kind of ambassador will you be?”

## **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 sanctuary. We believe prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God. We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. ***Remember... someone is praying for you.***

This week, we encourage you to note those things you hear in the message that you would like to come back to think about further. Then throughout the week, look over these notes and pray for guidance and understanding.

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