A Christian Response to Isis
Pastor Bob Vale / March 8th, 2015

Sunday March 8th Bulletin Information

Sermon Title: A Christian Response towards ISIS.


Scripture Lesson: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Saturday Night:
Hymn: # 327 Crown Him With Many Crowns
Chorus: Turn, Turn, Turn. (Pastor Bob)
Sermon: A Christian Response towards ISIS.
Closing Hymn: 431 # Let There Be Peace On Earth

Sunday Traditional:
Announcements
Hymn of Praise: # 327 Crown Him With Many Crowns
Prayer Hymn: # 189 Fairest Lord Jesus (Verse # 1)
Choir Anthem
Offertory: Baugo Bay Gospel Singers:
Sermon: A Christian Response towards ISIS.
Closing Hymn: 431 # Let There Be Peace On Earth

Sunday Contemporary:
Announcements
Praise Songs:
Turn, Turn, Turn: Pastor Bob & Praise Team.
Children’s Sermon
Prayer
Sermon: A Christian Response towards ISIS.
Offertory: Praise Team
Praise Songs:
Pastor’s Question Responses
Closing Song: 431 # Let There Be Peace On Earth
Closing & Benediction:
Turn, Turn, Turn (Pete Seeger, Byrds) Capo #2  Chorus:

G       C     C/B  D7                   G       C     C/B  D7
To everything turn, turn, turn; there is a season turn, turn, turn.
C                   D7                  G
And a time to every purpose under heaven.

Verse 1
D7                  G                   D7                    G
A time to be born, a time to die, a time to plant, a time to reap,
D7                 G                     C  C/B
A time to kill, a time to heal, a time to laugh, a time to weep.

Verse 2
D7                                   G
D7
A time to build up, a time to break down, a time to dance, a time to mourn,
D7            G                       C  C/B  D7        G
a time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together.

Verse 3
D7                   G                     D7                  G
A time of love, a time of hate, a time of war, a time of peace,
D7               G
A time that you may embrace, a time to refrain from embracing.

Verse 4
D7                   G                     D7                  G
A time to gain; a time to lose, a time to rend, a time to sew, a time
to love, a time to hate, a time for peace, I swear it’s not too late.

ECC 3:1  There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:  
ECC 3:2  a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
ECC 3:3  a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,  
ECC 3:4  a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
ECC 3:5  a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain,  
ECC 3:6  a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
ECC 3:7  a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
ECC 3:8  a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.
A Christian Response to Isis
Pastor Bob Vale / March 8th, 2015

1. This is not going to be a political sermon about conservative or liberal and their views on the matter.
2. This is not going to be a bashing of the Muslim Faith.
3. I plan to look at three things.
   a. Define who ISIS is, what they stand for and illustrate the evil they currently represent in the world.
   c. Look at the Old Testament scriptures on the issue of ISIS.
   d. Let you sort things out and choose how you wish to respond as thinking Christians.

There is an evil scourge upon the world and it is growing.

This evil is called Isis, which means, “the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham -- "Sham" is an old Arabic term which means Syria and Lebanon. The people of Isis and their recruits are currently killing Muslims, Christians and non-believers by the scores around the world.

Why are we discussing such an evil as ISIS? Because the world is broken. When there is sin in the world, evil pops up in many different forms throughout our history. Sin has the capability to breed hatred, murder, war, racism, genocide, ethnic cleansing, religious intolerance and the killing of the innocent. What we are now experiencing at this time in our history, is a small fraction of people from the Muslim tradition, who are killing other Muslims, Christians and atheist by the scores. The reasons for these killings are varied.

In the past several years, the Isis terrorist army has morphed out of the Muslim al Qaeda terrorist group, who attacked the United States on September 11, 2001. Ironically the Muslim Al Qaeda group is not strict enough for the more conservative and radical Islamic ISIS beliefs of the Muslim faith. ISIS believes there should be a new national Muslim identity, called a Caliphate. By using the language of Caliph and Caliphate, ISIS is attempting to establish itself as the leader of a
worldwide Muslim movement, to mobilize a broad coalition of support, by erasing national boundaries; particularly in the Middle East. Isis has chosen Iraq and al-Sham (the Levant) as the territory from which this new "religious state" will emerge.

In the past several years, the ISIS army have brutally killed thousands, mostly non-Sunni Muslims, in this quest for power. Ethnic Christians have found themselves in ISIS’s evil path, but so have the armies of Syria (both the national army and the various rebel groups), Iraq and even Lebanon. It seems anyone who isn't willing to lay down their "flag" or sword and join the newly self-appointed ISIS Caliphate or global domination is deemed a traitor and deserves to die. This includes Muslim, Christian or atheist.

Over the past six months the killings by ISIS have increased. The execution of two American hostages by beheading has horrified the West and captured our daily imaginations. Other atrocities are occurring around the world with the bombing at the Boston Marathon, the killing of 13 U.S. soldiers in a gym by a deranged man of the Muslim faith, when he bowed his head, then yelled out, “Allahu Akbar”; which means “Allah is Greatest” as he gunned down the innocent unarmed soldiers getting ready for a deployment to serve their country. This past month there was the recent killings in France of workers at a cartoonist magazine and also at a Jewish market.

Two months ago four Christian children were beheaded in Syria, who were not willing to convert to the Muslim faith.

Let me stop here for a second. (I wish I had time to show you a five minute video clip of the Christian pastor (Andrew White) of the people of Mosul who knew these children. (Modern Day Nineveh of Jonah) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiB7nEwYJNg

If you get my notes on the church website you can watch the video of this pastor telling the story how the children said to their executioners; “No, we love Jesus not Allah.” So they were killed for their faith.
What would you do?

How would you respond with such a fearful life & death decision?

There was also the Jordanian pilot who was barbarically burned to death in his cell, there were the 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians who were beheaded on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, as they sang with their last breath, Christian Hymns to the Lord. This past week there were 70 Syrian Christians who were taken as hostages by the ISIS terrorist group. Each week there seems to be a different atrocity perpetrated upon the world and people of the Middle East by the evil ISIS army. When will it all stop?

As a global community we have not seen this type of hate and evil since the atrocities of the Nazi regime of the 1930 – 1945. It took a decade of fighting with most of the civilized nations of the world to bring this evil Nazi ideology to its knees. Millions were killed in this terrible war. I doubt there is a person in this room who does not have a relative or knows someone who fought or died in WWII.

We now have an evil problem in the world and it’s called ISIS. Even worse, their message of hate, killing and war is growing as they recruit others from around the world to join their efforts. Even some from our own country are willing to join their unjust cause.

I have always been one of those pastors who likes to call it like it is. I’m not one to soften an issue by naming it something that it is not. I don’t believe the term “Extremist Violence” clearly identifies the root of the problem in this case. While I certainly understand the Muslim faith are a people of peace and love, I also realize there is a small fraction of the 1.8 billion Muslims who have stolen and corrupted their peaceful faith for an interpretation that is not reflective of the true peaceful voice of Islam. I visited one of the largest Muslim Mosques in Egypt a few years ago and was invited to pray. It was both beautiful and peaceful inside. Be that as it may, the term “extremist Muslim radical” is as close as we can get to accurately defining the evil ideology of ISIS.
*I should let you know some Christian Scholars do not agree with me that in General the Muslim faith in a fully peaceful faith. They believe the ultimate goal is for world Muslim domination.

Let us also not forget that our very own Apostle Paul had similar distorted views, as he was a Jewish hunter of new Christians in the early first century. Saul / Paul, who was a member of the powerful Jewish Sanhedrin, went around finding and throwing Christians in prison, torturing or imposing possible death. (Acts 9:1)

It was not until Saul was confronted by Jesus Christ on the Road to Damascus that his evil life change and he himself became a Christian and changed his name to Paul. (Acts 9) Then Paul continued to write most of the New Testament and become one of the greatest missionaries and church planters of the Christian faith.

As Christians, we should also be honest with ourselves to understand the history of both Christians and Muslims over the past thousand years has not been perfectly peaceful. There have been murderous atrocities occurring over the centuries called the crusades. The hands of both Christians and Muslims are dirty with mistakes from our past. Both groups have sought forgiveness and healing from the other. In recent years are we not in some way repeating that history?

Within our own Christian tradition we have perpetrated our own small bands of extremism, and have had a corrupted interpretation of the Bible over the centuries.

1. The Crusades and killing of Muslims.
2. During the reformation of the Protestant Church many were killed in Europe for not believing exactly like another church’s beliefs.
3. The Salem witch trials and the killing of innocent ladies accused of being a witch.
4. The past 200 years of racism supported by the KKK and the justification of the scriptures to support such evil views.
5. The Branch Dividians from Waco Texas in the 1990’s.
Let me change direction a bit:

I am a follower of Jesus Christ…therefore I call myself a Christian.

I know many if not all of you in this room are also followers of Jesus Christ.

I believe Jesus Christ to be a God / Man who lived on planet earth 2,000 years ago for thirty three years. I believe Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man at the same time. Jesus Christ is God.

In calling myself a Christian…I strive to live my life in such a way as to follow His example, His Teachings, His words of direction for my life.

I strive to live my life in such a way as to illustrate the following things Christ taught us to do in personally relating to others.

1. I strive to be kind and loving to all people through Christian love, as Jesus said, the second greatest commandment is, “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself.” (Matthew 22:39-40)

2. I strive not to judge people, as Jesus asks me not to judge others. (Matthew 7:1-3)

3. I strive to help those who are needy, as Jesus asks me to help take care of “The Least of These” in our culture. (Those who are poor, downtrodden, hungry, and thirsty.) (Matthew 25)

4. I strive to forgive others as Christ forgave me. (Matthew 18:21-22)

5. I strive to treat people the way I would like to be treated. (Matthew 7:12)
Although I only listed five teachings of Christ, there are literally hundreds of different examples and teachings Jesus gave us on how to live the good and peaceful Christian life.

**As we look at the Life of Jesus, we must admit: “Jesus was a pacifist.”**

Without question when you look at the life of Christ, we see an example of a man who was not willing to raise a fist towards another person.

I have never read a scripture passage where Jesus got into a fight and hit another person.

I never read where Jesus said, to pick up the sword and charge the enemy.

I never saw within the life of Christ where he gave his disciples orders to get vengeance. In fact, the Bible teaches, “Vengeance is mine says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

Jesus was a person of peace and love….even to the point of losing his own life rather than fighting for his own life. (John 18:36)

**Examples of Christ words of peace:**

1. If someone hits you on one cheek, turn also the other cheek. (Luke 6:29)
2. Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you. (Luke 6:29)
3. If someone takes your shirt…give them your coat as well. (Luke 6:29)
4. When the disciple Peter cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest, (Malcus) it was Jesus who miraculously attached his ear back on his head. (It was his last miracle) It was also here that Jesus makes the statement, “Put away your sword Peter, those who live by the sword will also die by the sword.” (Matthew 26:52)
5. Even when Jesus was being beaten and crucified, he was a silent lamb to the slaughter. His gentle words to his brutal killers were, “Father forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34)

As we look at the four gospels of the Bible and learn from the Life of Jesus Christ, we see a man who was seeking ultimate peace in the world.

What about the other 62 books of the Bible? What do they say?

There are 66 books in the Bible and the four gospels tell us about the life of Christ; what do the other 62 books say about how we as Christians should respond to the evil of Isis.

What specifically does the Old Testament share with us about how to respond to ISIS?

Before I get into the scripture passages that talk about defending war, I think I need to help us understand the spiritual connection we have between the three major faith groups in the world.

1. **The Jewish Faith:** From the beginning of creation until the present: There are currently 14 million people of the Jewish Faith in the world.
2. **The Christian Faith:** From the first century A.D. until the present: 2,000 years. There are roughly 2.2 billion Christians around the world.
3. **The Muslim Faith:** 7th century until the present, representing 1.8 billion people. 570-632 A.D the prophet Muhammad.

Over 50% of the world’s 7 billion human population are comprised between the Christian and Muslim faith. The Jewish faith, which is the oldest global faith, comprises only two tenths of one percent of the world’s population.
Did you know these three historic faith groups are literally cousins in the faith? Let me explain.

All three faith groups of Jewish, Christian and Muslim pray to the God of Abraham. (Yahweh) In fact, Muslims believe that Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus are all Islamic prophets. Muslims call Christians the “People of the Book.” The name Muslim means, “one who submits to God.”

In the book of Genesis, Abraham, who was called the Father of nations was married to Sarah, but was not able to have a child. So Sarah presented her servant Hagar to her husband Abraham to bear a child for him.

Abraham and the servant girl Hagar had a son named Ishmael. Later Abraham and Sarah did have a son named Isaac. Because Sarah was jealous of Hagar and the first born son, Ishmael, Sarah asked Abraham to shun Hagar and her son named Ishmael and send them away. So Abraham blessed them and sent them away into the desert. According to Biblical history, Ishmael is the father of the Arab nation of the Middle East. In other words…historically speaking, we are spiritual cousins of the Muslim faith.

I think it is important to realize that the Old Testament is the record of the people of Israel over 3,500 years; while the four gospels and the rest of the New Testament only span a little over one hundred and thirty years.

The same God inspired the writers of both Testaments; however different views can be interpreted from both on the matters of war and peace.

Let me share some Old Testament scriptures on the topic of war.

The Words of Wise Solomon:
1. Ecclesiastes 3:8 says, “There is a time for war and a time for peace.”
The Words of Moses:
2. Exodus 14:13-14 ESV and Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

The Exploits of King Saul and David:
3. The Battles of King Saul & David: both of these Kings fought many battles to establish and extend the kingdom of Israel.
   a. The battles of King Saul:
   b. The battles of King David: “Saul killed his thousands and David has killed his ten thousands.” (I Samuel 18:7)

As we look at the Jewish history of the Old Testament we can see there were many times where battles and war were part of the life, growth and death of the kingdom of Israel over the centuries. Some of these battles were directed by God himself.

You Choose: War or Pacifism:
As one looks at the scriptures for the Old Testament and the New Testament, we can see it is a matter of choosing between following the pacifistic example of Jesus Christ or following the options for war as found in verses in the Old Testament. **Is there a Middle Ground?**

May we ask the question: Is there a difference between following the peaceful ways of Christ in our everyday one on one connections and relationships with our neighbors; as opposed to the responsibility of a nation protecting its people and future?

I say yes there is a difference.
Let me explain: I believe the words and teachings of Jesus help us understand how we are to treat our everyday neighbor with love, peace and goodness. It is our personal call of Jesus Christ as Christians to love, care and show peace to our everyday neighbors.

It is also the ever important responsibility of a government or nation to protect its people, even to the point of going to war and fighting towards lasting peace and security.

When we look at the evil of the Nazi’s of WWII or of ISIS today….the wise words of Solomon ring true in Ecclesiastes 3:8, “There is a time for peace and a time for war.”

Just as each of you have a Biblical right to protect yourself from death with deadly force…so also America has the Biblical right to protect its people from death with deadly force. (Genesis 9:5-6)

The Odd Difference between:
A Christian or Jewish Martyr will say, “I will die for my beliefs.”
The ISIS Muslim extremist will say, “You will die for my beliefs.”

As a pastor, I often get the question recently…with all the activity in the Holy Land area, are these signs of the end times and the return of Jesus Christ?

Although I am not one to continually raise the flag and say carefully watch for the second coming signs, I do have to say, there are too many things occurring for us to ignore the signs of persecution and activity in the Middle East. There are now wars and rumors of wars as well as the prime minister of Israel coming to America this week to speak to our law makers. I encourage you as Christian believers to Watch & Be Ready!

The Bible tells us to do two things concerning the end times.

1. Watch for the signs of the end times. (Of which there are more signs than usual, currently in the Middle East.) (Matt. 24:42)
2. Be ready spiritually. (This is much more important than the first.) (Matthew 24:36)
I close with the words of the great hymn of faith, “Let There Be Peace On Earth.”

“Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me; let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be. With God our creator, and children all are we, let us walk with each other, in perfect harmony. Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now. With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow: to take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.” (Sue Miller & Jill Jackson; 1987) Methodist Hymnal.

Let us pray, (The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi) Place words on screens in the sanctuary for the congregation to read.)

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is error, the truth;
Where there is doubt, the faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Words of Wisdom: Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.”

Benediction: May we be a people of peace and may the God of peace bless us and keep us as we strive to live together in peace in a broken and imperfect world. May God bless us all until we meet again. Amen.