

Sermon Notes
November 22, 2015
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Experiencing God: "Who We Wish We Were"

iii. The Truth is clear **privately** every day in *the battle between the "Flesh and the Spirit"*
1. Galatians 5:19,20 vs 5:22-23; Romans 7:7-20
2. Dostoevsky: "Notes from the Underground"

1. The Difference God Makes

God: Just an "idea" or a "living presence"?

God: Just in the good times? Or in the crises too?

2. Questions Become Personal in Crises

- Where are *You* now?
- What do *You* want me to think?
- How do *You* want me to act?
- ... Who do *You* want me to be?

3. The Present Crises

- Intractable Civil Wars: *Syria, Afghanistan, N.Africa*
- Millions of Immigrants and Refugees: *Jordan, Turkey, Europe, U.S.A?*
- Deadly Terrorism: *9/11, Paris, Beirut; Al Qaeda, Islamic State*
- Religion Run Amuck: *Islam now; but Christianity in 16th Century Inquisition, and 20th century Apartheid, Klu Klux Klan*

4. What Are the Answers Biblically?

- Is there just one Christian/Biblical Answer? One size fits all? No!
E.g., Is it possible or even necessary that
 - the Christian response of government is different*
 - from the Christian response of the Church?*
 - or the individual response of an individual?*
- Are there Foundational Principles to Guide us to Wise Conclusions? Yes!
... (*Ten Commandments, Sermon on Mount, Battle between Good and evil, the Bible's consistent message on care of immigrants, etc.*)

5. The Grip of Fear and The Power of Evil

- A Biblical theme from Genesis to Revelation:
= *The War between Good and Evil*
- The Power of Evil
 - Most of the time evil is "masked": *not black and white.*
 - The Truth is clear **publicly** as the "mask" comes off from time to time:
-- *WWI slaughter; WWI Holocaust, Genocides in Ukraine, Cambodia, Balkans, Rwanda . . . and NOW!!*
-- *Evil bring death out of life: movies cannot avoid the theme – Dementors (Harry Potter) , Capitol of Panem (Hunger Games)*

c. The Power of the Gospel

- The Empty Cross: **God Wins!**
 - Evil does its worst, but God wins: life trumps death
- The Christmas Story: **God Here, With Us!**
 - God does not stay in the Director's Box
 - God chooses to enter the world
-- *a world of homelessness (Mary and Joseph), where babies are slaughtered (herod), where families flee (Egypt) at the mercy of forces beyond their control (Herod and Caesar)*

d. Disempowering Fear: The Message of the Angel

i. Fear Not!

- Not "allow yourself to be naïve"
Not "pretend as if evil does not exist"
Yes . . . D-Day is here! VE-Day still to come!
- BUT "don't allow fear to be the controlling (and crippling) force and emotion"
- Camus (paraphrased, anonymous):
Fear is absorbed and communicated like poison or leprosy. Once contaminated we transmit fear – involuntarily, unwittingly, from eye to eye and mouth to mouth

ii. Pray Calmly --Think Clearly so we . . .

Become and Remain the People We Wish We Were

For example: Refugees – no easy solution

– **but we dare not forget**

- Jesus in Matthew 25:35 – "welcome the stranger"
- The Old Testament (at least 50 times) "remember the stranger, the alien (the immigrant) . . ."
E.g., Deuteronomy 27:19 "*cursed be anyone who deprives the immigrant, the orphan, the widow of justice*"
- Statue of Liberty: (Emma Lazarus)
*"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*