

Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

July 5, 2016

Well, it has been another hatred and violence-filled week around the world. The week was punctuated with terrible bombings in Turkey, Bangladesh, and Iraq, and with the murders of Christian anti-trafficking workers in Kenya . . . and that's without even beginning to consider the awful things that happened in the weeks prior to last week . . . or the hatred and violence that fails to make the media "radar."



And, short of such radical violence, there is anger all about the globe, whether with angry Brexit voters (both for and against), anti-immigrant sentiment in other EU nations, angry voters on the right and the left here in the U.S., anger in immigrant "ghettoes" all over the world—the list goes on and on.



We live in an angry world, and as every week's day's news sadly demonstrates, killing has become an increasingly frequent remedy applied to our dissatisfaction and distress. Paul warned us long ago that if we let our anger simmer overnight, we give the enemy of our souls a toehold, a beachhead, in our lives (Ephesians 4:26-27); and overnight, as we sleep, Satan begins to plant the terrible seeds of violence in our unguarded hearts.

Ron Mehl noted that unresolved anger draws Satan to our spirits like raw meat draws a shark, and it is Satan's avowed purpose to bring death and destruction to us and to all that is precious to us.¹ **Our Heavenly Father knows that if we carry anger in our hearts long enough, we will become capable of doing anything.** And that's why God says to us, *"Put Me first, because if you don't, you're going to hurt yourself and other people. Instead of becoming a bearer of My Life, you will become a bearer of death and destruction."*²



If you squeeze a tube of toothpaste, what's going to come out is what's in the tube. You're not going to get mashed potatoes or Jell-O. You're going to get toothpaste. And if we harbor anger in our hearts, what will come out when we're under pressure are angry and violent impulses. If we nurture God's love in our hearts, that's what will come out instead.³

We and the terrorists actually have a great deal in common. We may be currently at different points on a continuum, but it's the same

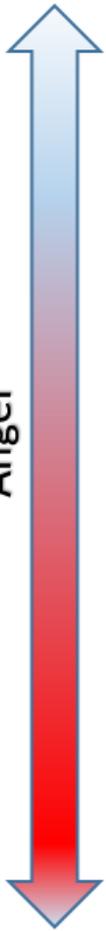
¹ Ron Mehl, *The Ten(der) Commandments: Reflections on the Father's Love* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, 1998, p. 156.

² Mehl, p. 161.

³ Mehl, pp. 161-162.

continuum. As we are, they probably once were; and as they are, we have it in us to become. It's all about how we handle our anger.

Irritation



Just this morning, as I was driving across Baltimore, several drivers behaved in unseemly ways near me, and though I didn't respond in a visible way, I had to wrestle with my internal responses to their behavior. Church itself is rather like that.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote that *"True Christian community is found in the place where the person you like least to be with always is,"*⁴ and Henri Nouwen reminded us that *"The one you least want to live with is the one who reminds you of that part of yourself that is most wounded and most in need of healing."*⁵

Anybody can be a "saint" when all alone. It's when we have to interact with other sinful persons like ourselves that we have a chance to allow God to work on those parts of our spirit where we do not yet look like the Spirit of Jesus.

We really do need each other, whether we like it or not. God uses our relationships right here in the Body of Christ to shape us into the Image of God. So, while we certainly do need to be in prayer about the condition of the world, we need, as always, to begin within.

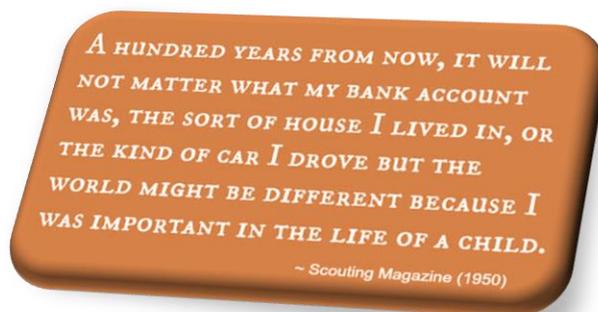
After we've done that, there are few things we can do together that have more potential to shape the future of the world than to build love and character into the lives of local youth whose families are ill-equipped to do so—especially the boys. That's where Pastor Neville focuses most of his time and energy these days, and

we're beginning to see the fruit of that labor.



And that's what we're doing at our Backyard Kid's Club this week. Please pray for us . . . and come and help ☺!

Dave



⁴ Arthur Boers, *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999), p. vi.

⁵ Boers, p. 120.