



PART 2: DOES RELIGION CAUSE VIOLENCE?

Sermon Notes

Text: Matthew 5:5; 9-11; 38-48

Intro:

Looking at our history as Christians and at the world as a whole, is it any wonder we ask this question? Examples abound of violent acts done in the name of one belief or another.

Christianity has a violent past...but so does everyone else

We were created to worship God

Revelation 4:11

When we make good things god things, bad things happen

The problem lies not in the religion, but within us

Jeremiah 17:9

The only way forward is with the help of God.

Matthew 6:7

Matthew 5:5; 9-11; 38-48

Violence is contrary to both Jesus' teaching and his example

We do not come to faith as empty slates

"Christians could not slay their enemies." — Origen

"Above all, Christians are not allowed to correct with violence the delinquencies of sins." — Clement of Alexandria

1. Not everyone who claims to be a Christian is actually one

Matthew 7:15-16

John 13:35

2. We should expect moral failure from Christians

1 John 1:8

The root of violence is our own selfishness

The violent act staked at the centre of Christianity is the Cross of Jesus.

Christianity doesn't glorify violence, it humiliates it.

Conclusion:

Does religion cause violence? It certainly can and it certainly has. But millions of followers of Jesus have been and continue to be driven by their faith and their love of God and others to serve them even at the cost of their lives.

Life Group Discussion

Warm up:

1. Do you find it easy or hard to talk to non-Christian family & friends about your beliefs? Why?

Study & Discussion:

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon? What challenged you? What did you disagree with?
2. Read Romans 12:17-21. Here Paul lays out an ethic that is so countercultural. How do we apply this to our daily lives in our current cultural context? Who are your enemies that you can show love to this week?
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves." What do you make with this quote? Have you ever been disillusioned by someone who claimed to be a Christian? (Share if you can without naming names or becoming too judgmental). Have you been disillusioned with yourself? Why would that be fortunate?
4. How do we fight against the eventual drift towards selfishness in our lives? What part does consistent gathering in a life group play in helping to battle this drift? Why is it so hard to be open about our own selfishness?

Practicing the Way of Jesus:

Meditate on this teaching of Jesus this week: Matthew 16:25 - "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."

Ask Jesus to help you lay down your life each day and to show you who to serve through surrender each day and to be focused on others rather than yourself.