

The Triumph of Justice – Easter 2002

I. INTRODUCTION

A. 9/11

1. The events of 9/11 are still fresh in our memory; they will be for some time.
2. The fallout of the terror attacks continues to dominate the news.
 - a. Operation: Anaconda, the fiercest fighting of the war so far was concluded just a couple weeks ago in Afghanistan.
 - b. troubles at airports around the nation continue.
 - c. flyovers of major cities by jet fighters has only recently ended.
 - d. but now they're talking about added security at nuclear power plants and natural gas factories.
 - e. the INS is under intense scrutiny.
 - f. the economy has been hammered and many people here this morning have been personally impacted by the economic downturn that took place following 9/11.
 - g. homeland security has become the main topic of discussion in many circles.
3. Following the attacks on the WTC, the government mobilized as never before to discover the perpetrators.
4. Once determined, we went after them in what was called a war of justice!
5. We wanted to go after the terrorists and felt totally justified in doing so.
6. The fact of the matter is – terror has been a big problem in the Middle East and many parts of Europe for years, but 9/11 literally brought the problem home to the US.
 - a. it was no longer something that happened “over there” where people are different.
 - b. it happened “right here” to people we know and love.
 - c. and the sheer scope of the attack was mind-numbing.
 - d. many were in shock because they couldn't fathom the monstrous amount of hatred that was required to commit such heinous crimes.
7. And then when it was revealed the terrorists had lived here for some time, getting to know the very people they would murder, the anger and outrage only grew.
8. This fueled the sense of justice we felt as our soldiers packed up and went off to do battle with the Taliban and Al Qaeda.
9. Months have passed – and the War on Terror continues – and still we feel it's a just war.
10. American officials travel all over the world attempting to convince leaders of other nations that the War on Terror is something they ought to participate in.
11. In a speech this last Wednesday delivered in Greenville SC, President Bush spoke to emergency workers and once more said this is a war of justice – not revenge, but justice!
12. Then he added something that was interesting.

- a. he said that while we're pursuing justice in the aftermath of the crimes committed against our nation and people,
- b. the War on Terror also aims at defending freedom from those who would destroy it.

B. An Example

1. Today, I want to use terrorism and the War on Terror as an example of something much larger – and that is, the history of our world.
2. Normally on Easter, we hear a message on the love and forgiveness of God
3. We talk about how the resurrection of Christ from the dead speaks of God's gift of eternal life.
4. All of that is true, but I want to focus our attention in another direction this morning.
5. I want to show how Easter speaks to the issue of Justice!

II. BODY

A. The Fall

1. You see, when God created, He intended Earth to be a place of freedom and blessing.
2. As part of the creation, He established certain laws to safeguard that freedom and blessing.
3. These laws govern both the physical and spiritual universe.
 - a. when the laws are followed, things work as they're supposed to.
 - b. when they're violated, there's trouble.
 - c. for instance, we all know what happens when people try to break the physical law of gravity
 - 1) the law of gravity is a good thing; it allows us to stay rooted here on earth and ensures we don't go floating off into space
 - 2) as long as we obey it, there's a lot of freedom.
 - 3) we can ski, snowboard, and bungee jump.
 - 4) but every so often you hear about someone who ignores gravity and jumps out the window of a 20 story building, thinking he can fly.
 - d. there's the law of atomic structure
 - 1) when it operates as it's supposed to, everything's fine.
 - 2) but when man manages to break the law of the atom, then we have a Nagasaki or Hiroshima; a Chernobyl or Three Mile Island.
4. The same is true for the spiritual laws that govern the universe.
 - a. when these laws are obeyed, life works well;
 - b. but when they're violated, life breaks down and the ultimate end is ruin & death.
5. We don't know how long Adam & Eve obeyed the laws God established over creation.
 - a. it might have been a few days,
 - b. it may have been many decades.
6. All we know is that as long as they lived within the bounds of those laws, both

the physical and spiritual laws, the world was paradise and all they knew was bliss.

7. But then it happened; Lucifer, the original Osama bin Laden, came and recruited Adam & Eve in an attack on God.
8. They became the original suicide bombers, in that they introduced the death-dealing presence of sin into God's good universe.
9. At that moment, our planet began a long slow slide from a lush paradise into a squalid refugee camp, where all humans beings grow up tweaked in our thinking - seeing sin as normal.

B. Sin As Terror

1. But sin isn't normal; it's a form of spiritual terrorism.
2. It's terror because it's an attack on the plan of God for freedom and blessing.
3. Every sin is like a bomb; some bigger, some smaller, but each does its own level of damage.
4. We can see the truth of this all around us;
 - a. marriages and families are torn apart by what? SIN!
 - b. friendships are ruined by what – SIN!
 - c. lives are destroyed – all because of SIN.
5. I realize it's a bit shocking for me to cast it in these terms but as sinners all of us are spiritual terrorists.
 - a. against the backdrop of 9/11 it may be a bit appalling to think of it in these terms but it's true.
 - b. we were so outraged at what happened at the WTC that thinking of ourselves in the same light may seem terribly offensive.
 - c. nevertheless – when we violate the spiritual & moral laws of God, we're setting off on a course that introduces death, misery, and pain into creation.

C. Hard To Understand

1. Following 9/11, most Americans were a bit stunned, finding it hard to understand how the terrorists could hate us so;
2. How can suicide bombers in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem give themselves up so readily knowing that they're taking many innocent people with them.
3. Now we know that the terrorists were raised that way.
4. Most of them were born and brought up in refugee camps and have been groomed since birth to think the way they do.
5. As sinners, we've been born into a world in rebellion against God and that hates Him.
 - a. we're raised thinking that sin, most of it anyway, is normal.
 - b. it's so common place that we've just come to accept that this is the way it is.
 - c. we rarely stop to consider just how ruinous sin is.
6. What we don't realize is that, just like our War on Terror being fueled by an intense passion for justice, our sin is an even greater crime that must be answered by God's justice!

D. God's War On Terror

1. Just as our nation has now embarked on a just war on terror, so God has initiated a War on the Terror of Sin!
2. He has a plan to restore peace and freedom to the Earth.
3. The difference between our War and God's is that in our War on Terror, we're only going after a very small number of individuals.
4. In the spiritual war, we're all guilty because as sinners we're all spiritual terrorists.
5. And this presents God with a dilemma – He loves us despite our sin and wants us to be restored to Him.
6. So what is God to do with our sin?
 - a. justice demands that it be punished for the spiritual crime it is and the pain and suffering it has produced.
 - b. but God doesn't want us to perish.
 - c. He hates the sin but loves the sinner.
7. Maybe we can catch a bit of the dilemma by thinking back to something that occurred right after the attacks on the WTC.
 - a. you may remember there were a few who voiced the opinion that rather than going out and hunting down the terrorists, we ought to seek to understand them.
 - b. they said that if we just sat down with them and talked, then maybe we could find a non-violent way to peace.
 - c. well, the angry howl and cry from those who lost loved ones and friends in the fall of the Twin Towers was intense.
 - d. they didn't want to talk – they wanted justice!
 - e. there's no understanding such hatred and such a horrific crime.
 - f. before there can be peace, real peace, justice must be served!
8. Friends, as terrible as the events of 9/11 were, they are but a drop in the bucket compared to the sin of the human race and how offensive and evil it is in the sight of God.
9. And the demands of His justice **MUST BE MET**.
 - a. before we can have peace with God –
 - b. justice must be served.
10. But how, without whipping all of us out?
11. That's what the cross is all about! That's what Good Friday means!
 - a. when Jesus Christ hung on that Roman cross, He paid for the collective guilt of all humanity.
 - b. God's perfect justice was fully satisfied in what Jesus did that day.
12. In Isaiah 53:11, the prophet foretold the cross and said this

God shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

13. God's justice was satisfied in the death of Jesus!

14. Matthew quotes Isaiah and says this; you'll find the text in your bulletin . . .

[Matthew 12]

18 "Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

- 19 He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.**
- 20 A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory;**
- a. look at that last phrase of v. 20
 - b. “till He sends forth justice to victory;”
15. God does not set aside His justice in forgiving us.
16. Really, His justice has to be satisfied BEFORE He can forgive us.
17. God’s forgiveness of our sins isn’t some arbitrary thing in which He just says, “Oh it’s okay.”
- a. what would we think of a judge who just smiled at Osama bin Laden or Mullah Omar and said, “I forgive you. You can go.”
 - b. we’d say he was a fool, and grossly unjust!
 - c. God is no fool and is perfect in His justice
 - d. and this is why the Cross was necessary.
18. What the Resurrection says about the triumph of justice is that what Jesus did on the Cross was truly enough!
- a. the resurrection proves that the Father was satisfied with the Son’s work.
 - b. the resurrection proves the truth of Jesus’ last statement – “It is finished.”
 - c. if Jesus hadn’t risen, then he’d still be dead, and that means he’d still be paying for sin.
 - d. it would mean that the demands of God’s justice had not been fully satisfied.
 - e. but the resurrection proves that God’s justice has been satisfied!
 - f. it’s God’s stamp of approval and evidence that forgiveness can now flow to those who will look to Christ in faith.

III. CONCLUSION

A. The Difference

1. Our War on Terror is fought with guns and bombs; God’s War on Terror is fought with Love.
2. The recruiting motto for the US Army is, “An Army of One;” God’s Army truly was an army of One – Jesus Christ.
3. He didn’t come as a commando with weapons of violence; He used a totally different strategy – The Strategy of Grace!
4. In our War on Terror, our soldiers are going after the terrorists to “get” them, meaning in most cases, to kill or capture them.
5. Jesus Christ came to “get” us – but that means to “win” us!

B. If Only . . .

1. Let me end with this - A minute ago I mentioned the opinion, voiced by some, that if only we could sit down and talk with the terrorists, maybe we could avoid bloodshed.
2. That may be just wishful thinking as far as Al Qaeda and radical Islam are concerned, but most of us probably wonder why they hate us so.
3. We think that if we could just sit down and reason with them, they would

change and the world would know peace.

4. It's unfathomable that after reasoning with them, they would still want to carry out such hateful attacks.
5. I want to turn that around now and say that to those of you who have not put your faith in Jesus Christ.
6. Why do you hold back? Why will you not put your faith in Him? Why will you hold on to your sin, your spiritual terrorism, when He has paid for it and opened the pathway to forgiveness?
7. God says, "Come now, let us reason together you and I. Though your sins are as scarlet, I will make them as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, I will make them as white as the whitest wool."
8. The cross is the triumph of justice over sin.
9. The resurrection proves the pathway to forgiveness is open to all.