



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“TODAY'S HOLY WARS”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Ephesians 4:25-32
Date: July 31, 1976

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on July 31, 1976.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Ephesians 4:25-32).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would "fill in" the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

The bulletin that week shows that the hymns were "Holy, Holy, Holy," "This is My Father's World," and "God the Omnipotent." The anthem was Dvorak's "Hear My Prayer."

Showing that some things are constants, the bulletin mentioned had this item: "The Professional Job Changing System" is now in the church library. It is considered by some the most helpful resource for those needing to locate a new position.

Above the sermon notes was this single verse: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

I. Introduction

A. A cartoon this week of Lebanon Christians on one side of a barricade, Muslims on the other.

1. The Muslim, with a burst of machine-gun fire, says "Take this, in the name of Allah."

A Christian, with a 45 automatic responds "Here's one for Jesus!"

A Muslim, with sharp-shooter's rifle shouts, "In the Name of Mohammad."

And a Christian, firing from a window "This one is for the Virgin Mary!"

2. Last night's paper tells us that again an attempted cease-fire to permit the evacuation of 1000 wounded from Tal Zaatar was delayed.

B. In another column, we read of two bombs wrecking a newspaper warehouse, a soldier wounded by a booby-trapped flashlight, 3 Protestants killed by a bomb in a pub and another Protestant apparently killed at his home.

C. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

D. What kind of religion is it whose adherents are involved in fratricidal wars, against those of another faith and against one another?

1. Little wonder that religious leaders were told by Machal, Frelimo leader of Mozambique, "We have no cross, and we are united. You have your cross, and you are divided. I want no spreading of your religion in our new country."

E. Is religion responsible for these wars -- or is it a misuse of terms?

II. The Irish Conflict

A. Conflict between the islands of Great Britain and Ireland goes back beyond recorded history

1. It provides the principal subject matter for most Irish fables.

B. The first British King over Ireland was Henry VIII -- so acknowledged by Parliament, if not by the Irish themselves.

1. It is perhaps more than coincidence that he was also the first Protestant king.

C. Elizabeth sent her armies to crush Irish resistance and confiscated 600,000 acres of land -- which were given to the English. James I gave 800,000 -- mostly in the North (Ulster) to Scottish colonizers, at the expense of Irish.

1. 300 years of conflict closed with freedom being granted to the Republic of Ireland in 1920 -- with Ulster remaining under British parliament.
2. The ancestors of many of us were among those who, having settled in Ireland, found the land no more fertile than the stony hills of Scotland, and who then went on to America hoping for something more hospitable.

D. Ulster

1. 2/3 Protestant -- 1/3 Catholic
2. The best land, the capital are Protestant
3. "Apartheid" is about the closest analogy to the past role of Catholics in Ulster.
 - a) *Protestants do not live on Catholic streets.*
 - b) *Catholics are limited in the jobs they can hold by many employers.*
 - c) *Most of the restrictions are not by law but by custom -- much as the restriction of blacks in the past was more cultural than legal in U.S.*
4. Secret societies are a part of Irish tradition.
 - a) *IRA founded in U.S. in 1850*

E. Extremists

"If guns are made for shooting, then skulls are made to crack.

You've never seen a better Taig, than with a bullet in his back."

Protestant bully-boy ballad

I swear by Almighty God, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, by her tears and wailings, by the Blessed Rosary and Holy Beads, to fight until we die, wading in the fields of Red Gore of the Saxon Tyrants and Murderers of the Glorious Cause of Nationality, and, if spared, to fight until there is not a single vestige and a space for a footpath left to tell that the Holy Soil of Ireland was trodden by the Saxon Tyrants and murderers..."

IRA oath

1. I.R.A. is forbidden by the Catholic Church in Ireland -- but not necessarily by the local priest.

a) *I.R.A. has lost much of its religious overtones.*

It is a mortal sin for a Catholic to become or remain a member of any organization or society which arrogates to itself the right to bear arms or to use them against its own or another state; that it is also sinful for a Catholic to cooperate with express approval of, or otherwise assist any such organization or society."

2. Rev. Ian Paisley, self-ordained Presbyterian clergyman -- no part of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland

3. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey -- a Maoist

F. Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Catholic Archbishop are in constant contact.

1. Both deplore the violence.

2. Ceasefire called for Christmas a couple of years ago -- and it was extended to March.

G. Presbyterians are implicated in it not because the Presbyterian Church wishes the conflict, but because she tolerated the conditions that made it inevitable.

III. Lebanon

A. Christians go back to the time of Christ.

B. A strip of coastal plain, backed by a mountain range.

1. These mountains protected and isolated Christian from Muslim desert people. And protected cover when attacked by sea.

2. Beirut, faces the West, far more than the Arab East.

C. Independence -- post WWII

1. Dominated by Turks to Civil War.

2. Dominated by French to WWI

D. Population majority was Christian

1. Napoleon III, in driving out Turks, ordained that the head of government be Christian

E. Palestinian incursion

1. With Jewish invasion of Palestine, many scattered -- were placed in refugee camps

2. Not given opportunity for employment, vote, even right to leave camp

3. Muslim population did not have education advantages of Christians

F. No census, for Christians would likely now be a minority

1. Once more, primarily an economic and political conflict that has followed ethnic lines coincidental to religious lines.

G. Our missionaries have been strongly supportive of the Palestinian grievances

1. They have been used by the Arabs, expelled by the Jews

2. Adults 25-30 years of age who never lived outside barbed wire

H. Culpability by omission, not commission

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:25-32

Ephesians 4:25 says: ²⁵Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.

- Are there times when you find yourself not “speaking truth” to your neighbors? Under what circumstances do you do that? Are there individuals or groups to whom you are always truthful and others to whom you are not? What differentiates them?

Ephesians 4:26 and 27 says: ²⁶ Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷ neither give place to the devil.

- Here the verse acknowledges that humans get angry but stresses that it not lead to sin. How do you deal with anger while keeping a rein on your actions? How do you release your anger before you sleep at night?

Ephesians 4:28 says: ²⁸ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.

- What do you do to help others so that they are not driven to stealing and sin?

Ephesians 4:29 says: ²⁹ Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear.

- What do you do to control the things you say so that you “give grace” to those who hear?

Ephesians 4:30 through 32 says: ³⁰ And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.

- What can you do to focus on being kind, tenderhearted and forgiving?

Study Questions -- Part II*Sermon :*

The sermon notes end as indicated, although there are several pages of handwritten notes that seem to have been used to develop the sermon to its final state. Clippings with some of the information for the sermon were also included in the packet.

- I.A. This sermon was preached in 1976. Do you think any part of that cartoon would need to be changed for today's world?
- I.A.2. Do you perceive this kind of situation differently that in 2011 very often it is countryman against countryman in some situations? How does that alter the way you think about addressing the underlying problems?
- I.B. How do you react to thinking about a time when sectarian violence was common within the Christian world rather than today's perceived Christian versus Muslim incidents?
- I.D. Dr. Galbreath asked a timely question in 1976. It is still timely today. How do you think religion has always been able to justify "holy wars" from the Crusades through our day?
- I.D.1. What difference do you see today in nations that seem to have minimal religious presence as opposed to those that are largely of a single faith? What about those that are multifaith?
- I.E. How much of the current conflict in the world do you think is based solely on religion? Do you think faith-based conflict has increased or decreased since 1976?
- II.A. Where do you think the Protestant/Catholic issues in Ireland stand today?
- II.B. Do you think Ireland would have been more accepting of the English conquest if England had remained Catholic? Do you think the way England became Protestant had an impact on the reaction? What about the ongoing relationship?
- II.C. There was traditionally a strong tie between Scots and the Presbyterian Church. How do you think present day Presbyterians feel about any ties to Scotland? Do you think they matter anymore?
- II.D. Do you think the world gives much thought to the Ulster issue today? Do you think most Christians consider it a poor reflection? To whom do you think it matters more: Catholics or Protestants?
- II.E. What do you think when you see these opposing taunts? Does this alter the way you look at some radical Muslim views of the West, and especially America?
- II.E.1. Do you think there is a way for Islam to make similar statements about terrorizing others? Is there something equivalent that the United States should support to address Muslim grievances against us?

- II.F. Can you think of any equivalent ecumenical effort that could be undertaken in today's complex religious world?
- III. What impact do you think all of what Dr. Galbreath describes about Lebanon has on the continuing tensions in the middle east and around the world?
- III.F. To what degree do you think the current world situation is economic and political as opposed o religious?
- III.H. What omissions are Christians making in today's world? What steps can we take to correct that?

Dr. Galbreath seems to have been able to close this sermon without notes. How would you have ended it in 1976? How would you end it today?