

Do you ever find yourself feeling afraid? What do you do?

There was once a little boy, who was having a hard time sleeping. He cried and cried. His parents tried everything to calm him down. At first, they told him, "Don't worry, there is nothing to be afraid of." Then they came back and turned on all the lights, looking under the bed and in the closet, trying to show him there was nothing to fear. Eventually one of the parents said, "Look, go to sleep, there is nothing to be afraid of."

The little boy continued to cry and finally said, "Would you please come and lay down with me?" The father, who by this time was really tired, said, "Just remember, God is with you."

The little boy said, "Dad, will you please come and lay with me. I know God is with me. But right now, I need someone with skin on."

I love that. The little boy was afraid. He wanted someone there to comfort him. He wanted someone with skin. God has given us the opportunity to be skin to each other. Do you ever find yourself feeling afraid?

Monday, September 11 is the fifth anniversary of the worst attack on United States soil. It is the fifth anniversary of the worst terrorist attack the world has witnessed. It has left us all feeling vulnerable, like we are now in the midst of a new game, a new world. One in which the old rules of war and national politics don't easily apply.

What can we do to face the challenge of terrorism? What can we do as people of faith in response to such brutality and pain? How can we deal with the feelings within of anger, hurt, and the desire for justice to be served, caused by such vicious acts of terrorism?

First of all, there is simply no way to condone the actions of terrorists or terrorism. The evil that has been unleashed through terrorist actions is wrong. There is no place for it in civilized society.

The terrorists are NOT freedom fighters. They do not care about building a world of justice or of building a world that is better for all.

In my view, they are motivated by their own self-interests and in getting ahead for themselves. They misuse their religion to justify killing and brutality. And all you have to do is look at the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan to see the type of world they would like to create.

It is not a nice world, nor a good world. It needs to be stopped. *My hope is that how we as Christians in Sun Prairie choose to respond to the threat of terrorism, can help lead a way to stopping terrorism in the world today.* How can we respond to terrorism?

There are many ways to respond, one of the ways is **we could ignore it**. We could try and convince ourselves that the threat of terrorism is really far away from us. We could try and imagine that it really doesn't affect us. This is one response. It is not the best response.

**We can try to understand the hatred behind it on the part of some of those in the Middle East.** This isn't going to be easy, because it will mean taking the chance to learn and understand.

If we did this, it might help us understand the long term effects of those who feel that too much of the world is living in poverty and oppression, caused by policies of our government and other western governments. History has taught us that those who are impoverished and oppressed will eventually rise up to fight.

There are many in this world who see the breeding ground for terrorism as oppression and poverty. Evidence already shows that at times when the prospects for peace appeared more hopeful in the Middle East, the ability of terrorist groups operating in the region was greatly diminished.

If we can examine the deeper roots of terrorism, we might be able to find a different way of dealing with it. As followers of Jesus Christ, we might actually discover that working for a world of justice for all and reducing global poverty, might actually be more effective in the long term to defeat terrorism.

**Ultimately, terrorism challenges us to ask ourselves, who are we?** How are we going to live? It forces us to answer the question, am I going to love God? Or am I going to love hating those who hate us, more than I love God?

Terrorism breeds fear, anger and hate. It invites us to act with vengeance. When we are hurt or attacked our natural response is to hurt back.

I believe that when we respond to terrorism out of vengeance, the terrorists to win. Because they hate us, our way of life, and our world, if they cause us to act in ways that betray our faith, they win. And they don't have to win.

We don't have to live lives that are afraid. Nor can we afford to stick our heads in the sand in a Pollyannaish sort of way. We can live out of our best instincts and values as Christians. We can live understanding that God calls us to place our hope and trust in God and not be afraid of the events of this world. We can live for God by working toward a world of justice for all.

We can live for God, loving God, so that when hurt and pain come our way, we can so focus on God that we not lose our way. There was once a woman in North Korea who was arrested for giving away Bibles.

She was beaten. She was tortured. She was placed into solitary confinement, in a cell with no windows and her only light coming from a light bulb that hung on an electrical chord. Her guards tried to get her to forsake her faith. They tried to get her to reject God.

They threatened to hurt her family. They did unmentionable things to her, all in an attempt to break her. She received very little food.

One day a guard became angered at her for some little infraction. He was so mad, he pulled out his gun and he shot out the solitary bulb that was in her cell. Then he snarled, "Now what are you going to do? The only thing you had was light and now I have taken even that away from you."

From out of the darkness the woman said, "My light comes from God. You can never take that away from me."

This woman understood who she was. This woman leaned on God in the darkest moments of her life, and found that God was there for her. What I know is that God is there for us. God wants to walk with us to be God's skin for each other. We can choose to love God more than we love hating those who hate us.

Our hope in dealing with our fears from terrorism, is not to respond out of those fears to our baser instincts, but to look to God. To face terrorism head on and challenge our government to face it so that it will ultimately be defeated in our world.

May God help us live lives that are faithful.

Amen.