

God Is Love

This has been a busy day. Much of the day involved necessary errands. I often enjoy great music, books on tape or CDs, and like the average American, I catch the news on the go. Today was primarily a news day for me. But I can't wait to let tomorrow's music clean my mental palate! No matter where I went or what format I followed I kept hearing about Oprah Winfrey's defilement of having endorsed a book by a man who was not truthful in his facts. In the closing moments of the day the exchange that I picked up in a sound bite had to do with an outrage because this man said he had a root canal and he did not give the correct details about whether he had Novocain administered to him. I said to my wife, "Has it come to this? This is the news?"

Now on the other side of the world Hamas, perhaps the most radical wing among the Palestinian politics, has emerged as victor in Thursday's elections. Among the gloating is a woman, now elected to a powerful position and loved by many. She is Mariam Farahat, in Gaza known as Um Nidal, or Mother of The Struggle. She is a mother who sent three of her six sons on Hamas suicide missions against Israeli targets. "We consider it holy duty," she told ABC News. "Our land is occupied. You take all the means to banish the occupier. I sacrificed my children for this holy, patriotic duty. I love my children, but as Muslims we pressure ourselves and sacrifice our emotions for the interest of the homeland. The greater interest takes precedence to the personal interest." She is most famous for her presence in a Hamas video, showing her 17-year-old how to attack Israelis and telling him not to return. Shortly afterward, he killed five students in a Jewish settlement before he was killed himself. Um Nidal's home has become a shrine to her dead sons, with admirers and other members of Hamas often dropping by. Um Nidal is not your typical Hamas candidate, but she does represent an extreme wing of the party – one that is wildly popular despite being downplayed in this election. "I had no desire to join the parliament or the political arena," she said. "It was enough ... the pride of jihad, and I found that I have to complete my social and political duty." Destroying Israel is not something Hamas has promoted much during this election campaign. But at the grassroots level in Gaza, where Um Nidal campaigns, most Palestinian supporters believe it was the violent attacks against Israel that forced them to pull out from the Gaza Strip last fall. "This is our strategy," she said. "We are working on two parallel lines – the political and the jihadist." Um Nidal is now a politician, but she says violence is still an option. And she does have three sons who are still alive. If necessary, she says, they will follow in their brothers' footsteps. (Much of this paragraph is taken word for word from an ABC news report).

To further glimpse what these kind people believe, I give you a quote from The Jerusalem Post, January 26, 2006. The article is under the title of *Hamas's charter: The martyrs' oath*: "Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious...The Movement is but one squadron that should be supported by more and more squadrons from this vast Arab and Islamic world, until the enemy is vanquished and Allah's victory is realized..." To state the obvious, these people mean business. And their business is death. Quite a departure from the heart of our Lord who teaches us: "*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee*" (Psalm 122:6).

One week ago today we honored the unborn in "Sanctity of Life Sunday." I feel a deep hurt within my heart that we as evangelical Bible believers have paid our tribute and now it's back to business as usual. It is estimated that today 3,758 babies' lives were taken before they had an opportunity to be born. What a contrast! With 1.37 million babies aborted every year since the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision, we have a "9/11" every day exceeded by approximately 800. The march on Washington was made. Our president and others gave a good speech. The opponents of the culture of life were respectively quiet. Yet, even in the silence, to borrow the phraseology of Lewis, "God shouts to us through the pain." I preached my sermon, we came to the altar. We shed some tears. Then for some reason this ridiculous story of a man who lied about his problematical life and made a best seller out of it is now front page. James Frey, author of an alleged memoir entitled, "A Million Little Pieces" told more serious lies than the one about not having Novocain when he had dental work done to four teeth. But this story sticks in my gut as something

almost symbolical of what is happening in our wonderful country. In a sense, we have silenced the silent scream of the unborn with many different things. We have applied the Novocain of apathy to our hurting Republic. Mr. Frey didn't miss his pain-killer. He told us he was hurting when he wasn't. America is, to a degree, anesthetized. As this government of and by the people have reached out to hurting, starving, and dying children of genocidal regimes and AIDS epidemics on the other side of the globe, let us not forget the holocaust of our precious innocents. In the ancient Psalter, God composes a heartbreaking inspired melody that goes like this: *"But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood"* (Psalm 106:35-38).

Dear flock at Christchurch and to my brothers and sisters in Christ who read these words around the world, forgive me for not having substantial answers as to what we should do. I know we should not adopt violence. This is in God's hands: *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:19-21). As Paul gives us directive with the very teaching of Jesus, my heart's prayer and I would ask you to make it your prayer, "Lord, what good can we do to overcome the evil. So as we now move into the second week of thirty-years since Roe vs. Wade, let's awaken from our Novocain, escape the culture of death that permeates the world outside of Christ. We are not of those who lay down the lives of our children in the name of hate on one hand or expediency on the other hand. John said it best in three wonderful words: *"God is love"* (I John 4:16).

- Pastor Pope -

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