

Repeating Myself

July 14, 2024

Exodus 20:13

Luke 22:47-51

From time to time on social media, I introduce a thought with something like these words: "I shouldn't have to say this," or "I shouldn't have to say this again," followed by, "but I guess it has to be said: You don't get to kill people."

Yesterday's event in Pennsylvania, when someone with a rifle apparently attempted to assassinate Donald Trump, killed a spectator and wounded three people including the former president, leads me to say it again. You don't get to kill people.

Honestly, that ought to be all I have to say about it, but sometimes a preacher has to toss out the prepared sermon about rejoicing in God's grace and glory and take a look at the things we don't rejoice in so much. Human violence.

I wrote this in 2016: "I guess it needs to be said: You don't get to kill someone because they're different. God made LGBTQ folks. Muslim folks. Black folks. Brown folks. You don't get to kill them because of any of that.

"You don't get to kill people because you're angry, or scared, or offended, or embarrassed. You don't get to kill them out of resentment or a sense of betrayal. You don't get to kill them out of privilege or pride. You don't get to kill them.

"When the sword flashed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, 'Enough of this.'

"Two thousand years and millions of dead later, haven't we had enough?"

It took just three words in Hebrew for God to command us not to murder. Jesus used three words again to still his follower's violence. I'm a lot wordier.

And it still isn't enough.

Can we admit that we glorify violence? Can we admit that there is something compelling about the spectacle of it all? We don't entertain ourselves with actual deaths, the way the Romans did, but we do entertain ourselves with imitated violence (the Romans did that, too). The ancient Hawaiians praised the prowess of their warriors, as did the Japanese, Europeans, and native Americans. That's accomplishment in violence.

Amidst the acclaim of the warrior, where is the voice of Jesus saying, "Enough of this"?

The United States is awash in guns. We're also second to Brazil in the number of deaths each year. I've said this before, too. The problem with guns is not the increase in violence, it's the increase in deadly violence. Guns make it easier to kill.

With a lot of guns around, it's shockingly easy to kill.

Can't we make it harder?

I don't know. Americans do like their guns.

To be honest, as long as continue to praise the warrior rather than the peacemaker, then the worship of guns rather than the worship of God will have dominion.

Enough of this.

I don't really have a practical solution. I have a spiritual solution. It's a spiritual solution that's been available to humanity for the two thousand years since Jesus. It's a spiritual solution that's been available to humanity for the twelve hundred years or so before Jesus when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. "Do not murder." It's got the virtue of simplicity.

For the most part, it's worked.

It's just not working well enough.

Please God, let it work better.

Amen.

by Eric Anderson