

Greetings to all those who have love at the center of their being,

**SCRIPTURE:**

1 Corinthians 13:13 (MSG) – Larger reading: 1 Corinthians

*“But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.”*

**REFLECTIONS** on what is happening in the United States of American since 9/11:

We are deep into a political debate about who will be our next president. E-mails and postings on Facebook continuously raise the issue of what it means to “Vote Christian” – this concept raises all sorts of issues that some, who read this, will agree with and others will disagree. And that’s okay ... it can and often does produce a healthy and meaningful discussion (not a debate) on the various issues which come into play.

This is not the time or place to debate these highly sensitive issues ... and if we did, the issues wouldn’t be resolved. As a pastor I do call upon each and every one of us in the name of Christ ... for the sake of the whole world to match our faith to our actions.

In the great city of New York there once stood the Twin Towers ... a nation watched in disbelief and horror as they fell to the ground. Thousands died. Hatred brought them down and hatred has gripped the nation ever since. Hatred cannot win ... we cannot allow it to win ... we will be destroyed if hatred wins the day and God is pushed to the sidelines of life.

To all those who say that we need to get back to God should turn to the teachings of the Bible. Holy Scripture speaks of ... forgiving our enemies ... turning the other cheek ... of going the second mile ... not repaying evil with evil ... loving those who hate us and say all sorts of evil against us. Holy Scripture asks the penetrating question: How can we love God whom we have not seen if we don’t love our neighbor who we have seen? That sure makes me uncomfortable and pulls me into a spiritual struggle that is not easily resolved.

Holy scripture asks the follow up question: Who is my neighbor? ... And we know, in our hearts, who our neighbors are ... they speak a different language, worship a god by a different name, they wear different cloths and live a different lifestyle ... but they are still God’s children created in His image ... and they are our neighbors.

There continues to be fringe elements within the make-up of our country that see an enemy at every turn. They stir the pot of fear. They traffic in conspiracy theories. These individuals are so blinded by their philosophy of “me first” thinking that they are willing to go to great lengths to destroy the very framework which undergirds the greatness of our country. Sides have been taken, angry words are being exchanged,

urban legends continue to spread ... and God is being left out of any consideration as hatred takes a grip of the heart of the nation.

Scores of e-mails still arrive on a daily bases spreading hatred and misinformation ... bearing false witness? In the name of Christ nationally known pastors and religious leaders on television continue to stir the pot. The hate-jocks (you know of whom I speak) speak in angry tones of trying to preserve our beloved nation ... spreading the message of hate and anger. And, we are instructed in Holy Scripture that we are to leave judgment and wrath in the hands of God ... this is not our responsibility nor is it our privilege.

A winless war has been waged since the Twin Towers fell. Billions of dollars has been spent ... money we do not have. Thousands of lives of young men and women are being lost and tragically changed forever ... all in the name of hatred and anger.

When will this madness stop? When will we truly turn back to being that Christian Nation, the shining light on the hill, that we so proudly talk about? When will we become instruments of peace instead of war? When will we once again become the hallmark of justice, democracy, and freedom? When? ... When? ... When?

Today we will remember where we were and what we were doing on 9/11. We will remember the victims and mourn their passing. Their names will be read once again by a family member at Ground Zero. But will we stop the hatred and the anger ... or will we continue this madness and watch our nation destroyed from within? Who wins? Will it be God, a God of peace and love, or the other guys? It is our decision ... every day and every moment of every day. We are either part of the problem or we are part of the solution. May the "greatest of these" live in me!

**QUOTE:**

*Hate is like acid. It can damage the vessel in which it is stored as well as destroy the object on which it is poured.* - Ann Landers

**PRAYER:**

Lord, forgive our arrogance when we begin to think that we are better than everybody else. Yes, we are truly blessed to live in America, but don't allow us to take that blessing for granted. Help us to live out the blessings with responsibility serving everyone else ... and we mean everyone – those within the borders of our country and those outside of our borders. Make us a blessing today. In the name of the true blessing, Jesus Christ. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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