

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
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MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

No. 21

November 14, 2017

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Open doors-----Open hearts

Brenda Harris
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The Jesus Perspective

This past September I did something I have never done before, I planned out sermons and scriptures for the next three months. I don't like to plan that far in advance because I like to remain flexible so that the sermons can be as current as possible. But this year I planned things out this far in advance because Brenda and Pam were both scheduled for surgery and each would be out for several weeks. I decided to build up to Christmas day by showing the movement of action, the scenes, within the Bible from the first New Testament scene to the birth of Jesus. I used the Gospel of Luke and placed each scene in order of occurrence on each Sunday leading up to Christmas. With this plan in place the first scene fell on November 5.

This strategy meant that the sermons would be about the scenes leading up to the birth of Christ as opposed to the special messages on *All Saints, Veterans, and Thanksgiving*. I decided to start off by emphasizing how the news was unique to the individuals in the Scripture and unknown to the rest of the world as it was occurring. Well, a strange thing happened when I was delivering the message on November 5. The message was about the Angel Gabriel visiting Zachariah and announcing to him that he would have a son that is the forerunner to the Messiah. While delivering that message I mentioned that this is really big news but at the time it wasn't news. Only a handful of people knew about, for everyone else in life was going on as usual. Then I mentioned something important could be going on around us and we wouldn't even know about it. Well, on that particular Sunday a man went to a small church in a small town in Texas and began shooting worshipers that had gathered for Sunday services killing several people including many children. I found it quite ironic that this would happen on a Sunday when I mentioned something important could be going on around us and we wouldn't know about it at the time.

This is shocking news and it touches the lives of virtually everybody else. Of course it impacts the community in which it happened but it also impacts churches around the country as we wrestle with the uncertainties of violence during the sacred hour of worship. For this to happen in a church, during worship, is an abomination. We have important questions to consider. While our questions may stem from fear and uncertainty I think it's important to note that we find comforting reassurance in our Lord and Savior. Therefore, I propose that the questions we really need to ask are questions about Jesus. What would Jesus do? What would Jesus have you do? What did Jesus do? The first two questions are hypothetical we don't know exactly what Jesus would do, or what Jesus would have you to do, but we do know a lot about what Jesus did.

When it comes to violence there is one situation that I know of in the Bible where Jesus took action. It is when the mob came to arrest him. One of them (according to the Gospel of John it was Peter) drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off one of his ears. Jesus response to this was to put your sword away and he stated emphatically "all who take the sword will die by the sword." This scene is recorded in all four of the Gospels. When people address potentially divisive issues of concern whether it is political or social I sometimes ask a threefold question. What is your perspective? What is the Jesus perspective? What are you going to do to resolve the difference? Your relationship with the divine is never about somebody else, what other people may be doing, what others have done, or what somebody else should do. Your relationship with the divine is about the Lord and you.

In Christian love,

George Harris