COMMON HUMANITY

Posted on January 7, 2020 by Eddie

"God loved the world", he didn't just love Brits, Americans, white people, Israel or any other group that you might wish to name, he loved all of us.
Category: Observations

It is axiomatic for evangelical Christians that all human beings are created in the image of God. We are united in our common humanity. Yes, sin and division have crept in, but we still have this one fundamental part of our nature which is common to all of us. Wherever you come from, whatever your colour or creed, you are made in the image of God.

Now, let's take this a step further; we all have a common need to be reconciled to God, through the death of Christ and in the power of the Spirit. This is the only hope for humanity, but it is hope for *all* of humanity, without exception. "God loved the world", he didn't just love Brits, Americans, white people, Israel or any other group that you might wish to name, he loved all of us. The implication of this is that the highest priority for evangelical Christians should be that people, whoever they are and wherever they are, should be able to hear the good news of Jesus.

I realise that all of this is very basic, but sometimes it is worth stating the basics.

Which brings us to the news that Qasem Soleimani was killed in an airstrike last week an event which has further destabilised the Middle East and which may lead to war. It is not my intention to discuss the rights and wrongs of the events - though I won't avoid politics altogether - I simply want to talk about the fact that we (whoever we are) share a common humanity and a common need of Jesus with the Iraqi and Iranian people.

As Christians, our primary concern for people of the Middle East should be that they should have ample opportunity to respond to the gospel - and this is the primary lens through which we need to view current events.

I've seen some reports that missionaries are leaving Iraq because of safety fears, though I don't know to what extent this is being put into action at the moment. However, it is undoubtedly the case that in the Shia areas of Iraq and in Iran, life for Christians will get harder as tensions mount. Iran, in particular, has seen a significant number of people turn to Christ in the last few years, but in the current situation, it will not be easy to be a believer or to convert to what is seen as a Western (for which, read enemy) religion.

As Christians, we should be very concerned for the welfare of our brothers and sisters in the Middle East and we should also be troubled by the millions who do not know Jesus and for whom it looks as though it will be harder to hear of him in the future.

Just a couple of further thoughts. I came across this amazing quote in Sand and Steel: a New History of DDay (which is an excellent book, by the way). It concerns a Canadian soldier who took some souvenirs from a dead German.

> *Hester took some of the soldier's possessions as keepsakes, including an inscribed prayer book. Later he mused, 'We were the ones who carried bibles and prayer books. We were the good guys. Weren't we? They were the bad guys. What's he doing with a prayer book? In 1950, Hester returned the volume to the German's family and was astonished to receive a reply from his mother: 'We lost five children. Ernst was our last, the war took all that we possessed including five children. In this letter you will find a photo of my son. Take it as a souvenir of a German comrade that you saw only dead, but who was, in the depth of his heart, never your foe.*

Finally, for those who think that we should go to war, because God is on our side; Manfred Mann with a Dylan song:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c53RqNwogQI