THE SEED OF THE CHURCH

Posted on June 5, 2017 by Eddie

Christian martyrs don't go out in a blaze of crazed violence lashing out at others. Like their master, they don't respond to violence with violence, but through selfless love they point to the one who conquered death and the grave and rose to bring new life.
Category: Observations

This one might get a bit of push-back, but here goes anyway.

Once again, a major city has suffered an apparently random attack by Islamist militants. The details of the London attack have been rehearsed in great detail in the news media, so there is no need for me to go into them. Instead, I'd like to reflect on how I should respond.

I'll admit that as an Englishman, I'm rather proud of some of the reactions of people in the midst of the attack. The sight of a guy running away from the scene while carrying his pint and not spilling a drop (at London prices, you wouldn't want to) brought a big smile to my face.

I also liked this comment from the Washington Post:

> The stoic determination and decency of the British people and their leaders were on full display in the hours after the latest horrific terrorist rampage. The Brits fought back, launching drinking glasses and chairs at the savages who attacked them. The police acted with lightning-fast precision, killing the three assailants within eight minutes of the emergency call. And, God Bless him, a man returned to the bar where he experienced Saturday's horror — to pay his bill and tip. Civilization is not going to be driven out of Britain by three or three hundred killers.

However, while these sorts of things give a degree of satisfaction, they don't solve anything and the sad thing is that there is also a proportion of the British population who would cheerfully reply to this sort of atrocity with violence plunging us into an endless cycle.

So what to do?

I think we need to take a step back.

Whatever you think of the events on Saturday night, it is evident that the people who perpetrated it were willing to die for their cause - perhaps they even hoped that they would be killed. They believed in something which was worth more to them than their own lives. I'm not saying this to glorify or to excuse them, but simply as a statement of fact. OneÂ that we in the West struggle to get to grips with.

Ultimately, I believe that the only answer to violence and human division is to be found in the personÂ of Jesus Christ, the one who died and rose again to reconcile man to God and to break down the walls of hostility between human races. Yet, the vast majority of Muslims, those who support terrorism and those who are horrified by it, know next to nothing about Jesus. We can call for governments to take action and to pass laws, but that can only paper over the cracks. The Muslim world needs Jesus and it needs people who are willing to witness to him in hostile situations.

Of course there are some problems.

Much of the Muslim world is hostile to Christian witness; the forms of mission that we have been used to for generations won't work in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait - we need creative approaches to have access in these situations.

Not only that, but much of the Muslim world is hostile to people from Western countries; let's face it, we've not done much to win their friendship over the last few decades. However, the church is no longer mainly Western; perhaps it is a generation of Chinese, Philippine, African and Latin believers who will take the Gospel to the Muslim world.

Lastly in the heightened antagonistic atmosphere of the early 21 century, witnessing to Jesus in the Muslim world can be a dangerous enterprise. People have died taking the Gospel into the Muslim world and in all likelihood it will cost the lives of many more believers before we see large numbers of Muslims coming to Christ. We need a generation of Christians who believe in something bigger than their own lives, who are willing to live and work in hostile situations, perhaps seeing very little tangible fruit for their work and who are willing ultimately to lay down their lives. In a risk averse, litigious society it is hard to find people and organisations willing to put lives on the line in this way, but it must be done.

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