



This isn't the blog I planned on writing this week. Quite frankly, this isn't the blog I wanted to write this week, but in light of some chilling statements I've seen in the media and on Facebook, I thought it was important. Thought it's generally unspoken in polite company I feel that the broad sentiment in the US about Islam is somewhat negative. Not from everyone of course, but as demonstrated on social media, in the news, and in comments I've heard and overheard in the past several years, there have been some statements ranging from fearful to downright hateful. I don't feel like attitudes about Muslims were great beforehand but since 9/11 it has deteriorated. I get that. Nothing has damaged our national psyche as much as that attack. Fear and sadness stir up thoughts and attitudes that aren't so pretty but it's truly disturbing to me how far reaching and seemingly accepted Islamophobic attitudes are. I live in Colorado and the night the Batman Theater shooting happened the newscaster actually said, "Several shots were fired. We don't have an injury report or know if the suspect is in custody but Muslim terrorists are not suspected." It completely floored me. Every time there is a nut running amuck the news feels the need to reassure the public that it's not terrorists desecrating the religion of Islam? So, how to foster a feeling of brotherhood while calling out a few things that I don't think are acceptable in 2015? Some things have GOT to stop if any steps are to be made toward putting an end to this senseless pitting of races and religions against one another? Well here goes.

I've heard a lot of interviews in the past few days since the terrorist attacks in Paris, condemning Islam as a religion of violence and hatred for those of other beliefs. I'm going to write a few quotes here and you note which ones you think are from Muslim ideology and which are from another religion. I have

deleted some of the wording to conceal which religious texts they are from but have not changed the meaning.

1. "The False Prophets who try to lead you astray must be put to death, for they encourage rebellion against God. Since they try to keep you from following God, you must execute them to remove the evil from among you."
2. "If the killer has a vacuity of thought, then the murder did not undermine the essential purity of his mind and there is nothing wrong with it. Killing can be excused if it is done by the right person."
3. "To each community among you has been prescribed a Law and a way of life. If God had so willed He would have made you a single people, but His plan is to test you in what He has given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you differ."
4. "All these riches are mine and soon I will have even more. Already I have killed these enemies, and soon I will kill the rest."
5. "Those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me."

Now scroll to the bottom of the article and you will see where the quotes are from. How did you do?

I assume you knew I was setting you up for the non-violent text being from the Quran but I often hear Biblical verses being quoted, or sometimes misquoted to condemn something and opponents will bring up the fact that the same passages say something nonsensical about stoning people or selling daughters into slavery. Then the bible quoter will say something along the lines of, "Well THAT part is only relevant in the perspective of biblical time. You have to consider the context."

This week we have heard all across the media that the tragedy in Paris was perpetrated because it is against Islamic law for the likeness Muhammad to be depicted. A lot of scoffing at this attitude has been done by the western media and it's being condemned as an attack on Free Speech. The Quran is believed to have been revealed to Muhammad through a dialog with Allah. Muhammad himself is a prophet of God but not God himself. Muslims are against the worship of idols and as Muhammad is not God, having a likeness of him would be considered idol worship. Sound silly? Well, check out Exodus 20:1-15, but personally I've seen Jesus on everything from velvet paintings to umbrellas. It's one of those, 'out of context' things I guess.

Inevitably when something terrible happens and it's linked to Muslim extremists, some outraged person on TV, fanning the fires of Islamic prejudice, will cite Quran 9:5. "Kill the idolaters wherever you find them, and capture them, and blockade them, and watch for them at every lookout." The subject of context is rarely broached. This passage



was written in the early 600s A.D. At the time Meccan pagans had declared war on Muhammad and his followers. These Meccans resorted to torture and violent oppression trying to stop the emergence of Islam. They perpetrated several assassination attempts on Muhammad who was forced to leave Mecca and took refuge in Medina. When 9:5 was written it was after the Battle of the Trench where Muhammad and his followers resisted 10,000 Arab soldiers and returned to Mecca. It was the remaining resisters of Islam in Mecca that this passage refers to. It's not a call for the slaughter of innocent people.

Inevitably in the wake of some tragedy a poor Imam or other member of the Muslim community feels obligated to come on TV and explain that Islam is a religion of peace. Truth be told, every religion is a religion of peace but unfortunately there are always a select few that use it to create just the opposite.

One of Buddhism's main tenants is non-violence. Buddhist scripture doesn't allow for violence, or even anger. Yet this past spring, Buddhists in Sri Lanka attacked Muslims destroying homes, businesses and mosques while chanting anti-Muslim slogans. Attempts continue to oust Muslims from Sri Lanka in the name of preserving the Buddhist faith.

The Rakhine Buddhists in Myanmar, formally Burma, have instituted a 2 child limit for Muslims in a blatant attempt at ethnic cleansing. Surely, this draconian practice occurred in the context of some long ago time. No, actually that policy began in 2013. It's particularly gut wrenching since Noble Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi spent 15 years under house arrest in Myanmar faithfully demonstrating an undying commitment to equality, unity, and nonviolence.

Insisting that Muslims get on TV and condemn terrorist acts is racist. No one insists the Dalai Lama speak out against the Rakhine Buddhists nor does anyone expect TD Jakes to reaffirm his disassociation with the Westboro Baptist Church. The world doesn't see the Westboro Baptists as representative of all Christians or the Buddhists of Sri Lanka as symbolic of all Buddhists. Hatred, terrorism, and prejudice have no religion and radical fundamentalism in any context is dangerous as is dehumanization, and it must stop.

Anti-Muslim sentiment is even used against President Obama as in insult. It bothers me that it is politely ignored or sometimes privately agreed with. As with any elected leader, not everyone voted for him and not everyone agrees with his ideas, policies and methods. However, in my recent memory of previous presidents, though they have had just as many people disagreeing with them on issues, I never heard mainstream media giving time to those calling into question their citizenship or religion. Seven years after he was elected I still see an article here and there where someone is demanding to see a birth certificate, creating Photo Shopped student IDs and any manner of nonsense. Kenya seems to be the chosen accusatory birthplace which leads some to accuse him of being a Muslim. First of all he wasn't born there, his father was. Second of all, 70% of Kenyans are Christians, roughly the same percentage as the USA. Before his second inauguration I saw an article of dubious origins that said that an Imam was going to offer the inaugural prayer. It was totally false but what if an Imam did offer the prayer? There have been Muslims in this country since the at least the 1800s when many were unfortunately captured and brought as slaves. It's estimated that about 30 percent of slaves from Africa

were from the Northern Muslim countries. There are in the neighborhood of 7 million Muslims in the US today who have just as much right as anyone to participate in the inaugurating of our national leader. While I'm on that subject I feel like I should say, if I see that post one more time about Obama taking down the US seal and replacing it with a Muslim Prayer Curtain, I'm going to lose my mind. There is no such thing as a Muslim Prayer Curtain and the Eagle is where it always has been. Stop....just stop.

I realize that with readers of this blog I'm probably preaching to the choir when I say, there is not now, nor has there ever been a war on unbelievers. I don't know how effective I can be in convincing those that don't want to be confused with facts but Peace Be upon Them and all of you as well.

Until next time,

Lisa Burkhart

1. *Deuteronomy 13:5*
2. *An interpretation of the Buddhist text known as the Nirvana Sutra*
3. *Quran 5:48*
4. *Hindu Scripture from The Bhagavad Gita*
5. *According to Luke 19:27, Jesus said this.*