

I love theater; I was involved in it for a few decades of my life. I especially enjoy musicals. And a song from one of them sticks out in my mind this week. It's from a favorite musical full of drunken sailors and love on enchanted hoped-for evenings and coconut bras. State governments tried to ban the song from being on stage in their states, rumors were spread that the song represented Communist thinking from Moscow. Lyricist Oscar Hammerstein took a great risk and held firm that the song would go into the production no matter what the opposition or criticism. Ok, true, this controversy might not seem relevant to today. Or is it? Consider that this national reaction was 62 years ago and it amazes me that we need to hear the words today for they have not lost their truth. If you have never seen or heard the score from the 1949 musical called South Pacific, you are missing some great entertainment. Well, maybe it's not all entertainment. Listen to the lyrics of this particular song.

*You've got to be taught  
To hate and fear,  
You've got to be taught  
From year to year,  
It's got to be drummed  
In your dear little ear  
You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught to be afraid  
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,  
And people whose skin is a different shade,  
You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught before it's too late,  
Before you are six or seven or eight,  
To hate all the people your relatives hate,  
You've got to be carefully taught!*

You've got to be taught to hate and fear, you've got to be carefully taught.

How far hatred can carry the human heart was made intensely clear ten years ago. Nine-Eleven-o-one. (9/11/01). As the situations came into focus we all realized that no accidents had occurred. America was under attack. We had experienced what hate can produce.

Unimaginable tragedies piled one upon another, with a plane crashing into the Pentagon and another into a Pennsylvania field. The Twin Towers fell. Before night fell, the nineteen hijackers had killed almost 3000 people and sent out waves of grief around the world.

Were the hijackers carefully taught? They were consumed by hate and fed a desire to lash out against the United States in an act of terror more important to them than their own lives.

The carnage of that morning made a deep wound in the psyche of the United States. Ten years later, the wound has not completely healed. We fought back, first against the Taliban in Afghanistan, and then against Saddam Hussein and those who supported him in Iraq. Seal Team Six took out Osama Bin Laden, the man behind the terror. Yet none of these actions has brought healing. The surface may look like its scarring over. The pain remains.

I am not making a political statement. I don't know what the answer is or how to resolve our national situations. But I do know that we are not accountable for what is done to us, but we are

accountable to how we react to what has been done. Nationally, personally, and wherever else conflict arises.

On this day, when we remember the massacre, we can remember with such clarity the effects of distilled evil, the only product of hate and fear. We bring that collective pain here to the altar, to this holy sanctuary. And on this day of all days, we look to our readings of scripture for answers.

*God shall arbitrate between strong nations far away. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. For all peoples walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God.*

And we learn again that hate is not the name of the god we walk with.

*Christ is our peace. He has broken down the hostility between us. He came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.*

And we learn again that we need to listen. Not just hear, but really listen. Did you hear his proclamation? Or are we deaf to his peace?

*The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home....I have said this to you so that in me you may have peace. Take courage. I have conquered the world.*

Conquered the world by peace? What an unthinkable idea today for some. That is not what followed September 11. Some days I worry that we are closer to evil than to peace.

And this one day does not stand alone. World history is packed to the brim with acts of evil. Even within living memory, many of us have seen the killing fields of Cambodia, the wholesale slaughter of Stalin's iron-fisted reign over Russia, and the genocide of Rwanda. We have learned that once we are taught to demonize those we hate, then any act can be justified. We see that in the death camps of Nazi Germany, in the attempt to systematically wipe out a people. Once we are taught to demonize those we hate, then any act can be justified.

Looking to these acts of extreme violence, we must ask: "Are there not some crimes too atrocious to forgive? And on this day, we ask, Isn't forgiving the perpetrators of September 11 too much to ask? How could those of us who remain alive even have the right to forgive? "

Those are questions that are asked often at St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel, a church which is part of Trinity Episcopal Church, Wall St., New York. St Paul's was in the middle of Ground Zero and found itself home to those first responders who needed a shelter, a pew to sleep on, a place to take their shoes off and find a moment of rest, holy rest, in responding to the needs of the attacks. The rector, the Rev. Dr. James Cooper was there through it all and will preach this weekend in the very same sanctuary where people from all over the world now visit as part of their pilgrimage to the world trade center site. Cooper gives us some advice this day. A decade of fear and hate has gone by. Cooper tells us to:

1. Remember to love.

This is Trinity's parish theme for the tenth anniversary. Maybe there is no better advice. The horrific nature of the attacks had their counterpart that day in the messages that were spoken person to person, prayed, and heard by God. Remember to love. Every day.

2. Not a day, but a decade.

Let's try to make this anniversary more like a season and not just a day. Let's look back ten years and remember. Let's also look ahead ten years, considering how we might make the world better, and remembering that as God loves us and forgives us, so too do we love and forgive.

3. Practice forgiveness.

Remember to forgive (and remember that you are forgiven). When we remember we are forgiven by God, we pass that forgiveness along to others. Our capacity for forgiveness is not like a possession we hold on to. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

4. Find your spiritual response.

In Trinity Church, just after the first tower fell, the congregation that had gathered there did something remarkable: they read the Beatitudes. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the peacemakers. A spiritual response to physical violence and as powerful—more so—than any physical violence.

5. Be part of the story.

Millions of people visit St. Paul's Chapel every year. Why do you think they come? Perhaps to be part of the story they have heard about—the story of the best of humanity emerging after we all saw the worst of humanity. The St. Paul's story of volunteers giving their time and energy to those who needed it is a Christian story, a story the Church has been telling for ages.

6. Go help.

Why did so many volunteer at St. Paul's? Because we heard the whisperings—God loves you, you are forgiven—and the call to action that results: go help. Again, not for a day, but a decade. Bring those whisperings to others as we journey on together.

Cooper or I do not speak to how a nation should react when attacked by another nation or by terrorists. Instead, we are speaking about how you might react to the very personal hurt and betrayals you have suffered in reaction to 9/11, in reaction to other events in your life. Will you let hurt fester until it distills into hate? Or will you pray for the grace to forgive?

Elie Wiesel is a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps and is one who has every right to hate and spew anger. He says this: "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference."

Indifference. Continuing the same old rhetoric. Hate. Fear. Evil. Companions of ours over the past decade. This has to change. There is no Christian alternative.

What did 9/11 teach you?

You've got to be taught from year to year.

You've got to be taught before it's too late.

We've got to be taught.... to become the healing and resurrection of it all.

*Amen.*