**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Ekklesia Series***

 ***God Never Stops Moving His Church Forward***

 **March 31th, In the Year of Our Lord 2019**

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**(Unless otherwise noted, NAU text is quoted)**

 Over the last three Sundays, we have talked about Islam. I understand that Islam is a religion and being a Muslim is to be a member of Islam. From the time Islam came into the world (7th century A.D.), it has been a presence in confronting the Church. However, God’s plan moves forward. Muhammad died in 632 A.D. With his death, others took the lead in furthering his version of a military-belief-system whose evangelism is at the point of a sword. The Middle East, North Africa, Asia and Europe were never the same. Within a hundred and forty years, the Muslim military conquest extended from Spain to the borders of India and the North African coast. The Byzantium Empire kept them in check in Asia Minor (Turkey), but Constantinople fell in 1453.

 A hundred years after Muhammad’s death, Islam was halted in advancing beyond the Iberian Peninsula (Spain) at the Battle of Tours, also called Battle of Poitiers, (October 732). The victory was won by Charles Martel, the de facto ruler of the Frankish kingdoms, over Muslim invaders from Spain. The battlefield cannot be exactly located, but it was fought somewhere between Tours and Poitiers, in what is now west-central France. The battle has been described as one of the most consequential military encounters in history, for Martel’s victory over the emir of Córdoba preserved western Europe from Muslim conquest and Islāmization.<https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Tours-732>

 In 1683, the battle of Vienna stopped the Ottoman Turks (Muslims) from expanding into Europe. Even though the battle had strange alliances on both sides, the Christian defenders won the battle, and Islam was stopped. The Christians were divided in part between Protestant and Roman Catholics, and the Muslim side was also fractured by sectarian and national views. This is an interesting battle in history. The Ottoman Turks (Muslims) were led by Mustafa who had vowed under Allah to conquer Vienna. The Christian side was spiritually led by a monk name Marco. “The Day of Siege” is a movie worth seeing that chronicles this historic battle. https://aelarsen.wordpress.com/2016/01/07/day-of-the-siege-meh/

 In addition, the growth of Islam has spread through the world due to their culture of proliferating their kind through large families. Over the centuries when their populations became the majority, they then imposed their belief system upon the people. The Roman Catholic Church had the same fertility teaching.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\_of\_Vienna



 Through the rise of Islam, the Church continued to grow. The Dark Ages or the Middle Ages stagnated the growth of the Church, but the Church still advanced.

**State Church is not the Church of God.**

There needs to be a point made: it is my opinion that the State Church does not represent the accurate teachings of Jesus and true Believers. There were true Believers working inside the State Church who actually carried forward the faith. As always, God moves forward His Church through fallen man. The Roman Catholic Bishops (beginning with Emperor Constantine) and the Roman Catholic political rulers politized the Gospel. Jesus never taught compulsion. Jesus never instructed the disciples to rely upon the State to carry-out their mission. Paul did rely upon his Roman citizenship to carry him to Rome. This enabled him to witness Christ along the way. The State did not speak for Paul or direct him as to what to say. We should be able to rely upon the state to protect our God-given inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Where have we heard that phrase before? Paul pursued preserving his life. Within exercising our God-given inalienable rights, we are to live for God. We do not need to rely upon the State, and, at the same time, we need the State to not get in our way. In other words. . .

**Amendment 1***- Freedom of Religion, Speech, and the Press*

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

**Amendment 2***- The Right to Bear Arms*

A well-regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.

**14th Amendment July 9th 1868**

All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

The 14th Amendment constitutionally tied the Bill of Rights to the States. Therefore, Federal guarantees officially applied to the States. This is a product of the Civil War. Before the Civil War, the Federal Constitution and its Bill of Rights technically restricted the Federal government not the State governments. There was ambiguity regarding the power of the individual States being under the Federal guarantees regarding citizen rights.

**Why do I bring up this point?** Because no State, no country, no province or territory in the United States, even though its majority calls for Sharia law, can break from the contract of the Bill of Rights in the Federal Constitution.

 It is of the utmost importance that the 1st Amendment is to prevent the federal government to establish a religion and at the same time with equal responsibility not to allow a State to establish a religion. We Christians and people of other faiths are free to exercise our faith as long as our faith practices do not violate the Federal and State laws. There is not a ‘test of religion’ to hold public office.

**Through the Middle Ages, God pursues His main mission through Believers.**

 God came to us in the form of Jesus Christ to accomplish Godly achievements in order for mankind to live eternally. The main mission of the incarnation is to go to the Cross and achieve what no human could achieve: pay the price for all our sins. Christian historians agree that Paul’s letter to the Corinthians contained one of the oldest summations of the Gospel Message. Paul wrote from Ephesus between 53 and 57 A.D. (about twenty years after the Cross). It is believed that 1 Thessalonians was Paul’s first letter. Keep in mind that once Paul met the Lord, he went away for about 13-14 years before we see him appear again. We can calculate Paul’s ministry reading Galatians 1 and 2. Therefore, once Paul became active, he wrote to those to whom he had witnessed.

**1 Corinthians 15:1** Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

 **The Reason It Was God in the Flesh Jesus**

Jesus, the unblemished Lamb, was the perfect sacrifice. No man who ever died was without sin. There isn’t any Biblical name given who was sinless other than Jesus.

God does not require man to sacrifice another in order to appease Him or to pay the price of sin. God took care of this himself. This seems barbaric. However, it is the most effective way to attain the attention of hard-hearted man. The Cross is a heart-catcher. Once you know about the Cross, there isn’t any turning back. There is a decision to be made. This is the power of the Cross. This is the effective eternalness of the Cross. The Cross is intended to move men forward.

There is an innate sense of guilt in man. A sense of responsibility for acting and thinking right and wrong. It is built into man not to steal, murder, lie or covet. The knowledge of these principles is like breathing air. But man commits sins every millisecond. How is the guilt and seeking forgiveness dealt with? Man does not have the ability on his own to remove the guilt for the sins of life. This is where God participation is needed. God did what no man could do. Due to His great love and grace He took our place on the Cross. God came and interacted with us. He lived with us. Muhammad’s god never did this. In fact, Islam teaches that their god only interacts through his messengers like Muhammad. Their god has no direct contact with people. Their god is not personal.

2 Chronicles 6:36 "When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to a land far off or near,

Ecclesiastes 7:20 There is certainly no one righteous on the earth who does good and never sins.

Psalm 143:2 Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one alive is righteous in your sight.

Psalm 130:3 Lord , if you kept an account of iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am cleansed from my sin"?

Psalm 14:1 For the choir director. Of David. The fool says in his heart, "There's no God." They are corrupt; they do vile deeds. There is no one who does good.

Psalm 53:1 For the choir director: on Mahalath. A Maskil of David. The fool says in his heart, "There's no God." They are corrupt, and they do vile deeds. There is no one who does good.

Job 14:4 Who can produce something pure from what is impure? No one!

Job 15:14 What is a mere human, that he should be pure, or one born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

 A person is called by God’s Holy Spirit to surrender, to believe, that is to follow Him with all our hearts. We are called to a life of faith. This is to be an active life of faith. Our society is reported to be a free society where people can believe what they want. However, secularism’s mouth piece, the secular media and their academic partners have proliferated into people’s minds to believe what they want but never really being sure of what you believe. Your belief is only relative to you. It may not and most likely will not be true for another. There are no absolutes. Descartes’ “doubt everything” was reported to be a self-examination of all things, to scrutinize all things to the point of proving them to be true. Things that survived the doubting test could be true. Descartes lived in the 1600’s, a time after the hot-bed of the Reformation. The Reformation was still on-going with the State Church declining in esteem in the eyes of many. Thus, the reliability of God and Christianity in decline. This was due to the corruption within the State Church. At one point, there were three Popes. The common person could not see that they had been dubbed all their lives as well as the lives of their ancestors. So, which line of popes did Peter authority (Apostolic Succession) come through? This just added to the proof that their made-up system of authority from Christ is a bunch of “malarkeys”. This is - ministry speaking.

 The Western Schism, also called **Papal** Schism, Great Occidental Schism and Schism of 1378, was a split within the Catholic Church lasting from 1378 to 1417 in which two, since 1410 even **three**, men simultaneously claimed to be the true **pope**, ...

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western\_Schism

So many things came to light. This is due to those true saints, who did not give up and sought God to work through their lives. These were men whose names history has recorded: men like Wycliffe (1300’s), Huss (1400’s), Tyndale and Luther (1500’s) and so many others. The State Church had proven to be false once the Biblical text came into the hands of the common person. The rule and regulation for centuries, forced by the State Church, operated under the pretense that their authority to do so was from God. However, once people could read the Bible in their own language, the State Church was gutted of its spiritual authority. No doubt that nationalism also played a part. The authority and the rules of the State Church were not found to be chronicled in the Bible. This includes, but not limited to, infant baptism, transubstantiation in the Lord’s Supper, the treasury of merits held by the pope, purgatory, indulgencies, temporal and mortal sins, celibate priests, extreme unction or last rites, works salvation, sole authority held by the bishop of Rome and the Bible relegated to be subjected to Church councils and not to the individual Believer.

Whether it was Islam or the State Church, people sought spiritual freedom. People do not want to submit under compulsion. God designed us to make a free choice to surrender to Him and seek for His Holy Spirit to come into our hearts and guide our lives.

Under God’s great love and grace, we are all extended an opportunity to surrender to the Lord. There is a difference in “**submitting**” and “**surrendering**.”

**Submitting** does not carry the heart felt commitment. People can be made by force to submit. This is what Islam does at the point of the sword. Islam claims to be a religion of peace that calls for people to voluntarily submit to Allah. However, their historical and undeniable track record is forced submission. Recently, the world has witnessed women fleeing from Islam and denouncing their belief in Islam. These women are fleeing from their families who are hunting them down in order to kill them for denouncing Islam. Oh yea, it is voluntary. What a lie. Satan is the Father of lies.

**Surrendering**, humbling to God, is from the heart. God does not make people come to Him. The Beatitudes (Sermon on the Mount) start with those who are poor in spirit will inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus teaches that it is not enough to not kill but do not hate. This is a heart change.

 What changes people’s hearts? God’s Holy Spirit.

One of the huge differences between Islam and Biblical Christianity is the recognition of God’s Holy Spirit. Islam accuses Christians of worshiping at least three God’s. This is blasphemous to a Muslim who believes there is only one god, Allah.

 We Christians also believe that there is One God. However, part of the problem is that in many traditions within Christianity they proclaim that God has three distinct persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Granted, it is difficult to understand the Trinity, a word that is not in the Bible. This is not to say that the Trinity does not exist. It is to say that we need to understand what we are saying.

Perhaps we Believers need to seek other words to define God, understanding that our historical language assists in building the case for polytheism. Consider saying that God is all powerful and has abilities beyond human comprehension. In our limited explanation, we see and witness that God extends Himself in Spirit, and we describe God’s extension as His Holy Spirit. We also see and accept that God came to be one of us who is known as Jesus Christ. Man cannot limit God and His functions or presentations. We need to focus on God’s ability to present and form Himself, so we can interact and receive His mission. We cannot contain all of God. However, through God’s love and grace, we can accept and surrender to His indwelling Spirit to guide our lives. This is what gives Believers the victorious life. Paul declares in Romans 8.

 Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

 **9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.**

 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--

 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

 It is unfortunate that Islam sees Christianity as having three Gods. I see we need to find a better way to explain God to them.

We Christians, need to understand that Muslims see us through the lens of the long history of the State Church that is the Roman Catholic Church and their allies, European governments, during the Middle Ages. There is a reason the beautiful cathedral churches in Europe are empty. We, too, would not go there, as a person living in the Middle Ages or through the Reformation. I mean, once the State Church was exposed, who could be trusted. Man turned more to himself. The “Manifesto of Man” given during the French Revolution became the mantra for the common person. During this same period of time, America was forming. There was a remnant here. God always works through His remnant people. The Church of God moves on.

I understand that we experience a Faith/Belief in God, which we are called to. We will not be able to prove everything about God to a scientific certainty (Hebrews 11:1). When we Believers witness God’s Spirit indwelling us, we are testifying to a power that has come into our hearts and minds that we humble ourselves to. We have invited and willfully submit our lives, our being to God. Unfortunately, the State Church, like Islam forced people to submit in the Dark/Middle Ages.

 The Reformation (I observe this era to have it origins with Wycliffe in 1382 publishing an English New Testament), the era of Enlightenment (Late 1600’s to early 1800’s) and the Renaissance (1300’s to 1600’s) all contributing in breaking the forced submission hold on people’s lives. All these contributed to breaking from the religion of man attempting to be god or create and control a path to God. Man cannot control God ‘s Spirit. Granted the Enlightenment (Age of Reason) and the Renaissance are not considered part of Church growth but they did move the population of Europe away from the dogmas of the State Church.

*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. 9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?* (John 3:7-10 KJV)

So, like the State Church and anyone who subscribes to the same methods, like Islam, the Spirit of God is outside their authority.

Therefore, the point needs to be made that if Islam does not accept God’s indwelling presence in their hearts then how can they have victory in this life over sin.

2 Corinthians 3:4-64

Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

John 6:63 The Spirit is the one who gives life. The flesh doesn't help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

 Scripture is clear. Starting in the first chapter of the Bible. God’s Holy Spirit is on display in Genesis during the Creation when His Spirit moved over the surface of the earth/waters (Genesis 1:2). David prayed to God not to remove His Holy Spirit from him in Psalm 51:11. God declares to the nation of Israel that He will place His Spirit inside of them if they ask/call upon Him (Ezekiel 36). Paul is clear in Romans 8, Jesus is clear in His teaching to Nicodemus, we have to be reborn of Spirit to be saved. This is one of the main examples that Islam and Christianity do not worship the same God. Islam worships a man-made god. We Christians worship the Eternal God who is not limited in form or Spirit.

AMEN

God has placed in our hands, Believer’s hands, His power and authority to life so that others shall live. The Gospel of God, taught in the flesh, by Jesus Christ and attested to by the prophets of old. Grace runs through our hands, hearts, and minds. God chose us to work through.

AMEN