
A Reflection For Today

Wednesday of the 4th Week of Lent • HopeForNiagara.org



By: Rev. Kathleen Ordiway

Rev. Ordiway is the pastor of First Baptist Church, Niagara Falls, NY. She is also a member of the Niagara Ministerial Council and a member of the Board of Directors of Community Missions.

Fight Evil With Love

(Texts: [Romans 12:9-21](#))

It's so easy to let the evil of the world crawl inside of us and tell us how our lives would be better, how our bank accounts would be bigger, how we could have grander homes, happier lives if we just behaved like the rest of the world. It can be too easy to hate the evil of this world and to respond in equally in evil and violent ways. It can be too easy to be smug in our "rightness" and to have hate for those who disagree with us. We have to be careful that our reactions to the wrong, to the evil in this world are not as violent as the original action, the sin, that we hate. When we face those who do evil with anger, we are more likely to continue to spread that evil.



So what are we called to do? We are called to the ways of Jesus. When Jesus told the disciples what was to happen to Him, the great suffering that He was to endure at the hands of the elders and chief priests, how He would be killed, Peter, extremely upset, said, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But Jesus told Peter that he was not to be a stumbling block to him, that he should set his mind on divine things. We have to set aside the violent anger that builds up inside of us when we see wrongs being done, people being ignored or hurt and we are to turn to prayer. We have to follow Jesus' ways so that we have a chance to make a change in this world, a chance to replace evil with good, injustice with justice, war with peace. Don't get me wrong. We aren't to ignore the wrongs of the world, but to be more passionate about showing love, spreading joy. We should not ignore evil; we should fight it with love.

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In Romans, Paul is probably speaking to Christians who were facing hatred from their families and friends that couldn't understand the changes

that were happening in the lives of their kin. For instance, they were no longer worshipping idols, so they were refusing to attend public events. That's something we still face as we avoid a lot of the movies and music out there because of their sinfulness and then our families and friends laugh at us for being prudes.

When Paul says to love one another, to live in harmony – he's not approving evil. So much of what we see today is evil ... divisive, hate-filled speech and violence being right up there. But rather than repaying evil with evil, in verse 17, Paul tells us to "take thought for what is noble in the sight of all." We aren't called to throw evil words back or, as one writer said, leave bags of dog poop on doorsteps, but we're not called to be silent either.

I read about the small German town of Wunseidel, located in northeast Bavaria, which maybe unknowingly put Paul's commands into action. In 2014, sponsors agreed to donate money for each step marched by the Neo-Nazis who came to their town to demonstrate every year. It was billed as Germany's most involuntary walk-a-thon. Instead of greeting the group with protests, they put up banners welcoming them to the "Nazis Against Nazis" walk-a-thon. All along the route, the Neo-Nazis were encouraged to keep walking to raise more money. Organizers even put out a table of bananas to help them keep up their energy. They painted numbers on the ground so the Neo-Nazis could see how much money "they'd helped raise." They handed out bottles of water so the marchers had the energy to walk farther and raise more money. At the end of the march, the organizers of the Nazis Against Nazis "walk-a-thon" handed out certificates reminding the Neo-Nazis how much money they had helped raise to fight Nazis ... close to \$12,000 to be used to promote programs to help neo-Nazis defect from the extremist programs. It was so successful, other communities have used the same strategies.

As Paul said in verse 20, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Paul doesn't call us to be silent nor to ignore evil, but to be creative and loving in our response. A true Christian doesn't repay evil with evil, doesn't try to avenge themselves. A true Christian feeds his enemy, clothes his enemy, prays for his enemy. A true Christian shows God's love in the hopes that his enemy will know and love God, too.

(See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/18/neo-nazis-tricked-into-raising-10000-for-charity> about the story about the clever anit-nazi protest.)

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