

country and in our world. Over the ages, entire societies have built their belief systems on this pattern of salvation through violence. And for all our technology and modern advancement, we are no different. The myth of redemptive violence is truly the religion of our times.



We suffer an attack by terrorists and in response we declare war—it's completely natural because deep down we believe that war will save us. Our leaders, and a 90 percent majority of Americans just like us (if you believe the Gallup poll) are absolutely counting on more violence to save us from this terrible violence. It makes all the sense in the world, but can you hear just how crazy it sounds?

If we listen to Jesus, he'll help us hear how crazy we sound. He's sitting up there on that hill, arranging his notes for the Sermon on the Mount, gazing out over all the people who have been plagued by the loss, the hatred, the exhausting never-ending brutality of it all, and he says it as clearly as he can. "You've all heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'" And all the people nod approvingly because that's the

Hebrew Law, that's justice, retribution, punishment, vengeance, and that is how the world works. And then Jesus continues: "Well, I say to you, 'Do not resist an

evildoer.'" And all of a sudden, the silence falls so hard you can hear it drop. What do you mean, do not resist an evildoer? If you don't resist evil, it will run right over you!

A few verses later, he says, "You have heard it said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" And again everybody agrees. That makes total sense. "But I say to you, love your enemies and



pray for those who persecute you."

These are the hard days of our faith—the days when it is hard to be counted among the Brethren with our deep heritage of peacemaking and objection to war and violence. And yet now is when God needs us the most. In one way or another, our country is going to war. Some of the people God has created as surely as he created you and me are about to be demonized and hunted down and slaughtered in the name of vengeance, righteousness, and God. Our young men and women will once again be sacrificed on the altar where we worship the beast named Violence, who promises to save us but fills our fields with graves instead.

In the days ahead, many voices will vie for our attention and our loyalty. Uncle Sam will come calling, and the pundits from the left and the right will debate the minutiae late into the night, and the people will be polled, and the editorials will spill gallons of ink, and so on and so on. My prayer for us and for the world is that the voice we listen to the most will be the voice of that man who climbed a mountain so many years ago and taught us to overcome evil with good. We are a people who have known from our beginnings that an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. May we be the people who shatter once and for all the myth that violence saves us so all the world may see.

—Sharon Nearhoof May

Litany of headlines and scripture

Kelly Burk, pastor of the Richmond (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, compiled this litany for two readers. It was used at the Sept. 16 service.

Terrorism: Explosions rock New York, D.C.; Planes crash into World Trade Center, heralding string of acts: In a horrific sequence of destruction, terrorists crashed two planes into the World Trade Center and knocked down both the twin 110-story towers this morning. Explosions also

rocked the Pentagon and the State Department and spread fear across the nation. President Bush ordered a full-scale investigation to "hunt down the folks who committed this act."

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:36-39).

A Pentagon official said the United States will launch sustained military strikes against those responsible for the attacks as well as their support systems.

"But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:27-31).

Bush, Congress vow war on terrorism: Congressional leaders spoke of a strong and sustained—if unspecified—response to terrorism. "I think everybody is so angry they want to hit somebody," Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle said Wednesday as lawmakers discussed an initial installment in the \$20 billion range for the anti-terrorism effort.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and