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Quran burning, unchristian hate, and un-Islamic violence

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NCR Today

The thing I hate most about being sick is the massive amount of time my mind has to wander. I'm a ruminator of the highest order, and rarely do I ruminate on such things as the glory of the Grand Canyon or the creativity that drew someone to mount a live-cam in a tree to allow all of us the wonder of watching a nesting pair of bald eagles and their hatchlings up close.

No, instead I think about why one of my dogs has suddenly turned into a nervous, unpredictable maniac or what drives Pastor Terry Jones to do such hateful things.

As everyone surely knows by now, Jones is, in the words of a *Miami Herald* editorial, "the publicity-seeking crackpot" who recently burned a copy of the Quran. Since then, at least 24 innocent people have been killed by other crazy people who think that protesting Jones' action requires them to launch violent protests.

Jones is wrong. The protesters -- called a "raging mob" by various media outlets -- are also wrong. They aren't wrong in their feelings of outrage at what Jones did, but they are wrong in their actions showing that outrage.

Their protests have wound up killing at least 24 innocent people, the first seven of which were staffers at the United Nations in Mazar-i-Sharif. And they've done nothing to help fight the stereotype that Islam is a religion of violence or that Muslims are an inherently ignorant group of folks who are violently intolerant of any expression that dares challenge Islam. So, score one point for Jones as Muslims played into his plan of showing them as irrational lunatics.

But there is a deeper issue here and that is the fact that Jones is no Christian, no matter how many times he insists that he is. The definition of a Christian is a disciple of Christ, at least according to Jesus, who said people would know his disciples by how they loved one another. Nothing Jones does is loving, nor is it remotely humble, also a sign of a disciple of Christ.

Instead, Jones has made himself out to be the Almighty, just as Fred Phelps of the anti-gay, military-funeral protesting Westboro Baptist Church has. These so-called men of God are awash in such hate and pride they cannot possibly be in relationship with Jesus. (Let me repeat: **THEY CANNOT POSSIBLY HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.**) Have they even read the Gospels? Do they know who Jesus hung out with?

I'm a big-believer in free speech, but I part ways with my free-speech friends when it comes to hate speech, which I think both Phelps and Jones participate in way too frequently. I think someone should rein folks like them in, and since the Supreme Court has sided with Phelps, that leaves Christians the challenge.

The best we can do is live our lives as true disciples (i.e., loving as Jesus loved) so those who question if Christianity is truly love-based see evidence that it is. We can't do anything directly with Phelps or Jones, because their ilk are not able to hear reason or Truth, so convinced they are of their own truth.

All that said, the minute we cave to violent mobs upset that someone trashed their holy book is the minute we take a step in the wrong direction.

I think the artwork of Chocolate Jesus is offensive, but I didn't try to murder the artist. I get really pissed off when anti-Catholic jokes are made, but I don't slap the joke-teller. It bothered me so much to see a Bible defaced with the words, "This book will make you lose your mind" that I stopped going to the coffee shop that had said Bible displayed.

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I don't like it when my religion (or any religion) is defamed. But I use my words -- not my fists or any other weapon -- to express my outrage. That is a practice rioting Muslims in other countries need to learn if they are ever to get the respect for their religion they so desire.

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