

REFUGEE JESUS

Jesus was an undocumented child refugee. After his birth Jesus and his family were forced to flee to Egypt in order to escape the madness of King Herod.

Not only that, but Jesus lived in a place that was occupied by the ruthless Roman empire, which routinely killed, tortured and imprisoned anyone who even thought about revolution. There is evidence that a Roman general, named Varus, slaughtered thousands of men, women and children by crucifixion in a town called Soppboris which was 5 kms from Nazareth. Their crosses were visible from Jesus' home town.

If there was anyone that wanted to fight violence with violence, it would be Jesus – or swift justice by any means, or total distrust of foreigners, it would be Jesus because he always 'said it like it was'.. It's therefore surprising that Jesus addresses the issue of retribution like this, ' I say to you, do not resist an evil person, but whoever slaps you on The right cheek; turn to him the other also.'

How demoralizing to anyone looking for a fight. How impractical.

Jesus is saying that there is incredible power in enemy love. It's the opposite of what is expected. Imagine a Roman soldier beating a Jesus follower when that one is heard to gasp, 'Do it again, go ahead.' And what if a shirt was commandeered and a jacket was also handed over? Imagine that we were asked to carry a heavy pack for a kilometer and we offered to carry it through to the destination? There is incredible power in withholding our own power and showing only compassion.

We've seen the ISIS videos; we've watched the Paris and Mali attacks. We've read about refugees who have turned around and caused destruction upon the same people who welcomed them. We sympathize with those who need to close their borders out of genuine fear. We want to be safe. It is understandable that we want to bring acts of terrorism to an end by any means possible.

But what if we actually followed this life-changing teaching of Jesus? What if we showed love and forgiveness for those who try to hurt us. What if we gave selflessly to refugees instead of debating their worthiness? What if we took time to recognize that a hate group does not represent the entire Muslim population? What if we prayed for ISIS? Would it bring lasting change?

Isn't it ironic that our National Anthem says, '... for those who've come across the seas we've boundless plains to share?' As Jesus followers, let us practise the impractical.

May we literally think and do what Jesus did.

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