

Prejudice & Violence

Prejudice is the cause of so much unnecessary harm in the world. Just think of the recent killings in Orlando, Florida, the worst mass shooting incident in American history. While the killer may have claimed allegiance to ISIS, his obvious purpose was to publicly murder LGBT people, all of whom he considered evil. He did not come to this conclusion on his own but derived it from his religious beliefs, which makes the horror even more tragic. Faith, however, teaches us that every person is made in the image and likeness of God. There is no exception or conditions attached to this Biblical tenet. All prejudice, then, whether sexual, racial, or religious is contrary to God's original intention. Religion must uphold this fundamental principle of creation and be the first to disown and denounce all prejudice. If religion is clear on this issue, society will no longer be able to justify discrimination. Religion, precisely because people trust it, must take the lead, and unequivocally acknowledge the sacredness of every identity. There is no doctrine or ethic that validates prejudice. It is a sin against humanity and must always be treated as such. And the idea of separating sexual identity from sexual activity is just an excuse, no more valid than telling women that they must function in one pre-designated way. Likewise, all races, even though different, are uniquely beautiful. Prejudice, however, cannot see it.

Prejudice spawns violence. The brutal beatings and deaths of Blacks across our nation attest to this. So does ISIS which wages war against other religions, and even against different interpretations within Islam. Genocide, likewise, is prompted by prejudice. Easy access to weapons exacerbates the problem. Weapons will always be accessible to those who really want to use them. The same for drugs. That doesn't mean that we do not try to limit them for the well-being of society. Individual rights do not trump the common good. There have been no killings in Australia this year because guns are strictly limited. There has been only one murder in all of Japan this year. There have been less than five in England. Where guns are legally restricted, violence decreases. If the United States wishes to be serious about terrorism and violence, then weapons, certainly assault weapons, must be limited, if not outright prohibited. Reason, not politics, must inform our national conduct on this issue. The tears, the grief, the anger that naturally arise after the senseless killings in Florida, Colorado, Connecticut, and other places must be followed by equally strong actions that ensure the strict control of weapons. The right to own and use a gun ought to be restricted as much as driving a car which, in many ways, can be just as dangerous. All rights are conditional, not absolute. Gun possession is not an entitlement.

In the United States, we must begin a national discussion on the issues of prejudice and violence. These are serious problems which are weakening our internal stability. Such a discussion can no longer be postponed or politicized. Our international reputation and our national integrity demand that we address these issues in an impartial way.