

God is Our Refuge

Rich Nathan
December 12-13, 2015
Advent: Visitations Series
Psalm 46

The recent terrorist attacks in Paris and then in San Bernardino have put the whole world on edge. Paris was completely shut down for days as the entire French nation observed a period of mourning. Brussels, where several of the terrorists lived, was on high alert for weeks. Right after Paris, a married couple with a Jihadist philosophy opened fire on a Christmas party in San Bernardino, California, killing 14 and wounding many others, some of them critically.

Fear which is the terrorists' ultimate goal, has spread everywhere. David Gergen, an advisor to four presidents, both Democrat and Republican, described in a recent article a fear that he has not seen since the 9/11 attacks. Gergen said,

I talked to people who worry they will be shot on the streets of New York. I had one friend say that it is worse than 9/11. It just seems like all of us are vulnerable.

Politicians have been outdoing one another in trying to appear tough enough, strong enough, big enough to provide security for America. One candidate for President proposed barring all Muslims from entering the United States. Two others proposed religious tests for accepting refugees into our country – only Christians, no Muslims. One politician said that if he was President he would carpet bomb the area where ISIS is back to the Stone Age. And then jokingly, he added, "I don't know if desert sand glows after bombing, but we'll find out."

Over 30 states including our great State of Ohio has called for bans on accepting any refugees who are fleeing the Syrian Civil War from settling in their state. The Christian governor of Indiana tried to prevent the resettlement of a Syrian refugee family – a mother, a father and two children – from being resettled by the local Catholic Charities. The Archbishop of Indianapolis met with the Indiana governor to explain in some detail the plight of the family as well as the role of the Archdiocese in welcoming people to Indianapolis. He told the governor that the family has undergone over 2 years of background checks outside of the country. They've been screened by four government security agencies. They've been interviewed multiple times. They had to provide proof that they cannot return to their home in Syria. They've undergone medical screening. They've had to take cultural orientation classes. They've been fingerprinted four times. Despite this the governor of Indiana still did not want the family to settle anywhere in Indiana. The Archbishop respectfully dissented saying:

We welcome this family during Advent, a time when the Christian community asks God to renew our hope and recognize God's saving power among us.

Some states have even said that they would try to deny Syrian kids from being able to go to public schools, and that they would keep refugees from using state hospitals.

Christians have gotten in on the act. Several large faith-based organizations have called on a ban for accepting refugees from Syria. One very prominent president of a Christian university encouraged students at his college to get concealed-carry permits so that in his words:

We can end those Muslims before they walked in here. Let's teach them a lesson if they ever show up here.

Back in the 1940's a psychologist named Abraham Maslow wrote a paper in which he proposed that human beings are motivated by the meeting of our needs. So he created a pyramid which at the lowest level had the category of physical needs.

Picture of Maslow's pyramid – bottom level
Physiological Needs = Food, Water, Warmth, Rest

But then on the second level, Maslow had:

Picture of Maslow's pyramid – second level
Safety and Security

In order for human beings to thrive, we not only need food and water, warmth and rest, we also need safety and security.

I thought it would be wise in light of all the news coverage of the terrorist attacks and all of the political statements to take a one-week break from my Advent series to speak about how it is that a person with Christian faith ought to respond to the current threats to our safety and security. It has always been my desire as a pastor and preacher to help those who listen to me to live better lives, to live lives more in line with God's will and purpose. We have never as a church shrunk back from engaging the great issues of our day. I hope that we have tried to engage them differently than many politicians or TV talking heads. My goal in preaching has always been to shape the inclinations of your hearts so that you would more and more respond to whatever happens in your life or in your world the way Christ would, if he was facing the same situations.

So in light of the rise of ISIS and the threat of terrorism, the political statements that we're hearing 24/7 on cable news, I want to bring us back to living under the authority of the Word of God. As Isaiah the prophet said during a time of crisis in his country more than 2600 years ago,

Isaiah 40:6–8 (NIV)

- 6 A voice says, “Cry out.”
And I said, “What shall I cry?”
“All people are like grass,
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.
7 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the LORD blows on them.
Surely the people are grass.
8 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever.”

So what does God’s Word say to us during these troubling times in which we live? That’s what I’m going to talk about today in a message that I’ve titled, “God is our Refuge.” Let’s pray.

Psalms 46 (NIV)

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
3 though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
5 God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.
6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

7 The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8 Come and see what the LORD has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
9 He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
10 He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”

11 The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Before we consider how we ought to respond to the threat of terrorism and whether or not we should admit in any refugees from Syria, those fleeing the Syrian Civil War, I thought it might be wise for us to begin by considering the facts regarding terrorism in our country. What are the facts?

The facts

Since 9/11 and the massive changes that our country undertook in intelligence gathering and terrorism prevention, and Homeland Security, how many people do you believe have been killed on American soil by radical Islamists – people who were inspired by Jihadist ideologies? How many people?

Since 9/11 the death toll from Jihadist-inspired terrorism in the United States is 45.

Of course, that includes the 14 from last week in San Bernardino. Since 9/11 how many people do you think have been killed in terrorist attacks motivated by right wing or White Supremacist ideologies here in America?

Since 9/11 the death toll from right wing or White Supremacist ideologies in the United States is 48.

So since 9/11 the total number of people who have died in terrorist attacks on American soil is 93. How many people do you think die every day from fire arms?

The number of people who die in America every day from guns is 92.

Almost exactly the same number of people who have been killed in terrorist attacks over the last 14 years here in America die every single day in America from gun violence – either homicide or suicide.

Since 9/11 how many people do you think have been the victims of homicide in the United States, people killed in domestic violence, people killed in drug deals gone bad, people caught in the crossfire of gang violence, robberies – how many people do you think have been murdered in the United States since 9/11?

Since 9/11 more than 200,000 people have been murdered in the United States.

One more question. How many terrorist attacks have occurred at the hands of refugees since 9/11?

Since 9/11 the United States has admitted 785,000 refugees. The death toll from terrorist attacks by refugees is 0.

By the way, the two terrorists who murdered those 14 people in cold blood in San Bernardino were not refugees. The man was born in the United States. His wife came in on a fiancée visa. And it is entirely appropriate that the American government review our granting of visas, not refugee status, but visas which is an entirely different immigration program. It is completely appropriate that America review who we're granting visas to.

But the bottom line is that if you live in the United States you are thousands of times more likely to be killed by conventional murder than you ever will be by a terrorist attack. Indeed, you are five times more likely to be killed by being struck by lightning than you are to be killed in a terrorist attack over the last 14 years.

Those are the facts.

Now, I want to talk about the fear mongers.

The Fear-Mongers

In light of the reality that Americans have a 1 in 50 million chance of being killed by a terrorist in any given year, why do we feel so incredibly fearful? You've heard the old advertising saying that sex sells, well advertisers also have discovered that fear sells. Ad campaigns based on fear, something called shock-vertizing have been increasingly popular over the last several years. Fear is a strong emotion and it can be manipulated to steer people into making emotional rather than reasoned choices.

So you have these disinfectant commercials with cartoon-drawn bacteria on your kitchen counters. The cartoon bacteria are about 4' tall and they have fangs. The claim is that unless you spray your counters daily with Lysol or some other disinfectant, you and your children and your German Shepherd will be eaten by these bacteria.

There is currently an unholy trinity of media, and politicians, and special interest groups that believe that they have something to gain by selling fear to the American public. Demagogues have for thousands of years have manipulated the emotions of the public especially the poor by telling lies to stir up hysteria and to intensify support for their particular agenda.

Hermann Goering, the Nazi Commander of the Luftwaffe, the German Air Force, was also the second in command in Germany after Adolf Hitler. Goering explained how the manipulation of fear can lead people to support a war they otherwise would oppose. Here is what Hermann Goering, the Nazi, said:

The people don't want war, but they can always be brought to the bidding of their leaders. This is easy. All you have to do is tell them that they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism, and for exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in every country.

The great Irish statesman and political philosopher, Edmund Burke, who supported the American Revolution said:

No passion so effectively robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.

Fear mongers communicate the message to their audience over and over again:

Be Afraid! Be Very Afraid!

So what is the response to fear that we see in our country today?

The response to fear

I see two opposite responses to evil and threats here in America. One is the ultra-conservative response to threats which is to exaggerate the evil. And the other is the ultra-liberal response to threats which is to deny the evil. Let's consider these and turn first to the tendency of conservatives to exaggerate the evil.

SLIDE

Exaggerate evil

From the Ebola scare in which many were saying that we needed to prohibit any flights to Africa, or any people coming in from Africa, to Y2K and the apocalypse that was going to happen at 12:00 midnight on January 1st, 2000, to the false link between childhood vaccines and autism, to the Bird Flu, to the Swine Flu – the media has communicated 24/7, “Be afraid! Be very afraid!” And if a politician can gain in the polls by exploiting people's fears and claiming that their opponent is weak and unwilling to protect the American public from the obvious threat facing them, so much the better.

This isn't the first time in American history that politicians have exploited people's fears of refugees so that we Americans hardened our hearts and prevented people, who were trying to escape certain death, from entering our country. Back in the 1930's there were also fear mongers in the media and in government who advocated for an extremely restrictive grant of refugee status to Jews because the Germans were almost certain to plant Nazi spies among the Jews. Our State Department even turned down a request to send 10,000 Jewish children to America.

One desperate Jewish family tried to escape Nazi-occupied Europe. They applied twice for refugee status – once in 1938, a second time in 1941. They were rejected both times along with thousands of others. This one Jewish family had a last name of Frank. They had a daughter named Anne. Anne Frank and most of her family died in Nazi death camps. And while the Nazis murdered Anne, we Americans who closed our hearts and our country, are in some sense complicit in the deaths of Jews who tried to come into America, but had the door slammed in their faces.

What shall we say to this father?

Photo of Father holding his daughter

...who is fleeing on a rickety boat while he is cradling his children? I wonder what history will say about us in 20 years and the way we responded to the current refugee crisis. Courage is not what you would have done in hindsight. Courage is standing up to the fear mongers in the moment and doing what's right even when we're afraid.

Proverbs 31:8-9 says this:

Proverbs 31:8–9 (NIV)

8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.

9 Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy.

So, one response to evil is to exaggerate the evil which causes us to close our hearts to other people. The other is to deny the evil.

Deny evil

There are some ultra-liberal naïve people who have their heads in the sand and who believe that if we are just nice to people, everyone will be nice to us. There is great evil in the world. And ISIS is one expression of how dark and depraved human beings can become.

I read a story of one 16-year old Syrian boy, who for his own protection was given the name Achmed. Achmed lived in that part of Syria controlled by ISIS. He had to leave his family behind. He can't contact them for fear of having them murdered. Schools have been shut down since ISIS took over, so Achmed found a job in a pharmacy. When he ran out of medicine one day, he went to borrow some from another pharmacy. But that one was run by a woman and, according to ISIS, could only serve female customers. Achmed was arrested. He said, "They wanted to chop off my head because I spoke to a woman." Eventually, he was released. But Achmed said that he has seen more beheadings than he can count. ISIS executes every

Friday in the town square and all the people in the city are forced to watch the swordsman do his work. The bodies are left on public display. Sometimes in a crucifixion position.

Achmed said that if someone doesn't fast during Ramadan, they put him in a cage in public to starve for up to 3 days. Achmed himself was accused of skipping prayers and was sentenced to 20 lashes. A Saudi Arabian man administered the beating to Achmed using a horsewhip. He was tied in the public square and beaten. After that, he fled.

The reason people are fleeing Syria is because they are facing great evil – from the Syrian government and from ISIS. We're seeing pictures like this one:

Picture of a little boy who was washed up on the beach

This is a little boy whose body was washed up on the beach after the boat that was carrying his family who were fleeing from ISIS terrorism sank at sea.

So, again, I think it is appropriate for our government to review our visa procedures which are completely different than the procedures that we use for admitting in refugees. It takes 2 years and multiple background checks before a refugee fleeing from the utter evil of something like ISIS, before a refugee can set foot on American soil.

And because evil exists, here at Vineyard Columbus we have reviewed all of our security protocols at all of our campuses. We have beefed up our security teams. We have plain clothes police present in many key places and we just hired someone who was a special agent with the State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security, who served in Baghdad to oversee our security. We take our church's safety and security very seriously.

So what is the Christian response to fear?

The Christian response to fear

Again, the Bible doesn't minimize evil. It doesn't say, "Be a nice person and everyone will be nice to you." The Bible doesn't suggest that if you believe, and if you keep your nose clean, your life, or the lives of your loved ones will never be threatened. Psalm 46 lists three threats that can destroy our worlds. And, if you are outlining Psalm 46, you can say verses 1-3 involve threats from nature; verses 4-7 involve threats from our city being attacked; and verses 8-11 involve threats from this warring world.

How should Christians respond to threats and fears? The psalmist says, first of all:

Remember our God

God is our refuge.

Psalm 46:1 (NIV)

1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.

You know, one of the most penetrating questions we could ever ask ourselves is where do I turn to find refuge, to find security, to find safety when I'm afraid? Notice, the psalm says: God is our refuge, not God plus something else. The Bible regularly warns us to not put our trust in anything – or anyone other than God.

What might we put our trust in other than God? The Bible says do not put your trust in weapons. For example, here is what we read in Psalm 20:7:

Psalm 20:7 (NIV)

7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

Over and over again the Bible tells us to not put our trust in weapons. What do we seek refuge in other than the Lord? The Bible tells us to not put your trust in money.

Proverbs 11:28 (NIV)

28 Those who trust in their riches will fall,
but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

What do we seek refuge in other than the Lord? The Bible warns us against putting our trust in ourselves.

Proverbs 28:25–26 (NIV)

25 The greedy stir up conflict,
but those who trust in the LORD will prosper.

26 Those who trust in themselves are fools,
but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.

And the Bible also warns us against putting our trust in people or in politicians.

Psalm 118:8–9 (NIV)

8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in humans.

9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes.

So what does it mean to have God as our refuge? It certainly cannot mean that we Christians can't get hurt.

Followers of Christ live in the same world as those who don't follow Christ. We eat the same food. We drive on the same streets. We live in the same neighborhoods. We attend the same schools. We experience almost all of the same threats from the economy, and our health, and terrorism as everyone else does. Christians have been the victims of terrorism along with everyone else. So finding God as our refuge cannot mean and does mean that God promises to keep every bit of harm away from us.

To have God as our refuge means that whatever does come our way can never separate us from God. That's what the apostle Paul says in Romans 8.35-39

Romans 8:35–39 (NIV)

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It doesn't say that you, follower of Christ, will experience no trouble, hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword, or terrorist attacks – that you will not be at all threatened by angels or demons, or something in the present, or something in the future, or job loss. What is promised is that nothing can separate you, follower of Christ, from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That when you make God your refuge, when you turn to him rather than alcohol, or drugs, or sex, or more weapons, or your bank account, or some politician's promise when you say, "I now realize that I am motivated by a search for security, an answer to my worries; I'm going to escape into God," God will carry the brunt of this. God will keep you in his love.

And certainly we followers of Christ can look back on times in our lives when the Lord did supernaturally protect us when he led us away from making a foolish choice, when he protected us from the consequences of a foolish choice, when he protected us from dangers at the hands of someone else. There are times, friends, when God will literally step in and deliver you from a trap. Sometimes he delivers us through danger and sometimes he delivers us from danger.

Look with me at vv. 2 and 3.

Ps 46.2

^{Ps 46:2} Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

You know, the Bible tells us that the greatest command is that we love. We are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And we are commanded by Jesus to love our neighbor as ourselves. But even though the greatest commandment to us is to love, the most frequent command in the scripture is

Be not afraid!

Because God is our refuge and our strength and ever-present help in times of trouble, we can obey the commandment that is said to us more than any other commandment in the Bible – be not afraid. Do not fear!

What is the Christian response to fear? Remember our God.

Remember our future

Psalms 46:8–11 (NIV)

8 Come and see what the LORD has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.

10 He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”

11 The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

The scripture here is talking about the coming age of the kingdom where God will make all wars cease. Christian, you never have a reason to be afraid because of the future that awaits you.

As I prepared this message I thought that fear of death is such a universal fear. We spend hundreds of billions of dollars on medical treatments to keep our bodies alive, billions more on safety codes regulating every aspect of life. And it is the fear of death from terrorism that is being exploited right now by politicians and by the media. I thought since the fear of death is

such a common fear, how do people cope with the fear of death? I decided to go the source of all wisdom and all knowledge in the 21st century – Wikipedia. And, of course it has an article about how to overcome the fear of death.

Sadly, I discovered that Wikipedia didn't offer its readers any great help or hope in overcoming our fear of death. For one example, here is their first bit of advice:

Understand that it is a cycle. People are born, people die, and more people are born. Don't fear that you're being singled out, and that you have to fear death.

In other words, stuff happens! Deal with it.

Here is another bit of the deep wisdom found in Wikipedia:

Live life the way you're supposed to. Don't waste your time worrying about death. Instead, fill each day with as much joy as possible, and don't let things get you down. Go outside, play with friends, or take up a new sport.

Which, by the way, is great counsel, if you are in a nursing home – just take up a new sport!

Finally,

Just do anything that will take your mind off dying!

Swing dance, skip rope, get a tattoo, take a French cooking class. Just do anything to help get your mind off the fact that one day we will die.

Now here's the difference between Wikipedia's answer to our fear of death and the answer Jesus offers. In Jesus we have God who came to earth as a true and perfect King, who chose to die on a cross to pay for my sins and for your sins, but who rose from the dead and who offers eternal life, life in his presence forever and ever to anyone who trusts in who Christ is and what he did for us. In the gospel of John, Jesus put it this way:

John 11:25–26 (NIV)

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

To the extent that we believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and we believe that you will be one day raised from the dead along with Jesus. We have the answer to the universal fear of death and the fear of terrorism. To the extent that the message of Easter has gripped our hearts, to that extent, we can not only overcome the fear of death, but the fear of terrorism that has gripped the hearts of those who don't know Christ.

Why is it so hard for us to face the possibility of suffering? Why is it so hard to face the possibility of disability or a disease? Why are so many people falling prey to fear in the face of terrorism? Why is it so hard to face our own death, or the death of a loved one? It is so hard because many of believe that this broken world is the only world we're ever going to have. It is easy to feel like our present possessions are the only possessions we're ever going to have, and that our bodies are the only bodies we're ever going to have. But if Jesus has risen from the dead, then the bodies that we have and the world that we know are not the only bodies and the only world we'll ever live in. And no terrorist can ever take away the eternal kingdom that is awaiting those who have trusted in Christ.

How should Christians respond to fear? Remember our God. Remember our future. And finally,

Remember our calling

The Christian calling is not to shut our country off, or our hearts off from those who are fleeing persecution. And it is not to carpet bomb a country until it glows in the dark as we indiscriminately kill the innocent along with the guilty. What are we called to do?

We are called to welcome refugees as if we were welcoming Jesus himself. You know, in our church family here at Vineyard Columbus we have folks who were refugees from the slaughter in Rwanda, people who are refugees from the civil war in the Congo, a woman whose family escaped from Bosnia during the Bosnian crisis. Let me share with you in closing a story of one member of our congregation and the way he's responded to the refugee crisis.

Because I volunteer with World Relief, I've had the honor of welcoming two different refugee families here to Columbus: an Iraqi family of four last year, and a Syrian family of six a few weeks ago. Both were driven from their countries because their homes were destroyed and they feared for their family's lives if they remained. I love greeting them at the airport as they step off the plane to begin their new lives here, making it a celebration with a few discreet welcome posters I make, as well as, balloons (as I envision Jesus would!).

The Iraqi family had a 24-year old son who came as a refugee and resettled in Columbus a year earlier. As they were waiting to get their refugee status, the family (Dad, Mom, 22-year old daughter, and 17-year old son) would attempt to alleviate their son's (in Columbus) fears for their safety by telling him that they had gone to stay in bordering Turkey to avoid the fighting. The family actually never did go to Turkey, but lied to the son so as not to have him worry. Prior to their arrival, I helped their son, World Relief staff, and friends get their apartment ready by painting, cleaning, stocking it with dishes, TP, furniture, etc. Because their apartment wasn't finished and ready for them to move

in by their arrival, another couple from the Vineyard (John and Jennifer Mullineaux) hosted them in their home until they could move in to their place.

Three and half years ago, the Syrian family, (Dad, Mom, four kids, ages 3 (boy), 7 (girl), 13(boy), 15(girl)) walked all the way to Northern Jordan to escape the fighting in Syria. Until they arrived a couple weeks ago, they lived in a refugee camp. Although they were safe, they had no employment, the kids didn't attend school, and they weren't treated very kindly. Their youngest son was born in the camp and hasn't ever been to Syria.

Grateful and appreciative doesn't even touch the surface of the emotions they feel, having been resettled safely here in Columbus. I'm just one of the many volunteers/staff of World Relief that welcomes them and gets them settled. After welcoming them at the airport, I took them a hot Lebanese meal I bought from a local restaurant and some fresh fruit, as it 's closest to Syrian food I could get. Of course, they welcomed me with hugs, male kisses, and open arms to share the meal with them.

I regularly open my home and host conservative Muslims international students (often from Iran and Saudi Arabia) who are studying at OSU. They have become like family to my house. Iranian married couple, Ali and Mina arrived on Dec 24 a few years ago. What a great time to welcome them! Christmas morning, they got to read the story of Jesus' birth right with us, as well as, open gifts with their names on them from under the tree. To this day, they're some of our closest friends and speak so warmly of the welcome they received from followers of Jesus. They've even asked me if we know any followers of Jesus in another city in the U.S. to help a friend of theirs there.

Do you know that Syrian refugees are turning to Christ at an unprecedented rate? It's happening in Europe and Greece and Turkey as well as in Jordan and Syria. And it is happening on a very small scale here in the United States because of the very few refugees that have been brought here. Friends, there are two narratives going on that are competing for our attention. One is a story of fear – the fear of Muslims, the fear of terrorism. The other which has been documented over and over again that more Muslims have turned to Christ in the last 14 years than in the previous 1400 years combined.

There are two things I would like to call our attention to in closing. If you would like to know more about how Christians can relate to Muslims, we have a seminar coming up here at Vineyard Columbus titled Jesus and the Qur'an.

Jesus and the Qur'an – January 8-9, 2016

Without reservation, it is the best short training for having loving engagement with Muslims that I know of. If you want some information about this class, you can contact Janara Walker at

janara.walker@vineyardcolumbus.org

This weekend is also National Refugee Sunday which is where evangelical churches around the world are calling their congregations to give care and support to refugees coming to the United States.

We took an offering last month for Refugee Relief and are will use those funds to care for refugees both locally and abroad.

God is our refuge and our strength. Therefore, we will not fear! Let's turn to him now in prayer.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you were a refugee from your hometown shortly after your birth when your family fled from a murderous king named Herod. And Jesus, you and your family found refuge in Egypt. We pray that you would soften our hearts towards those who are fleeing their homes this Christmas. Grans us your heart towards the suffering. Free us from fear. Amen.

God is Our Refuge

Rich Nathan

December 12-13, 2015

Advent: Visitations Series

Psalm 46

- I. The facts
- II. The fear mongers
- III. The response to fear
 - A. Exaggerate evil
 - B. Deny evil
- IV. The Christian response to fear
 - A. Remember our God
 - B. Remember our future
 - C. Remember our calling