

What Happens When Power is Corrupted?

Texts: Matthew 26:47-56, 67; Luke 22:51

Open

As a child were you ever encouraged to hit back?

How about in your adult life, where do you find yourself “hitting back” or encouraging others to “hit back”?

- In traffic?
- When people are rude or insensitive?
- Being wronged or hurt by a neighbor, friend or a family member?

Discuss

As you consider the ISIS crisis right now, are you: angry enough to hit back hard, or not so sure what the right response is yet?

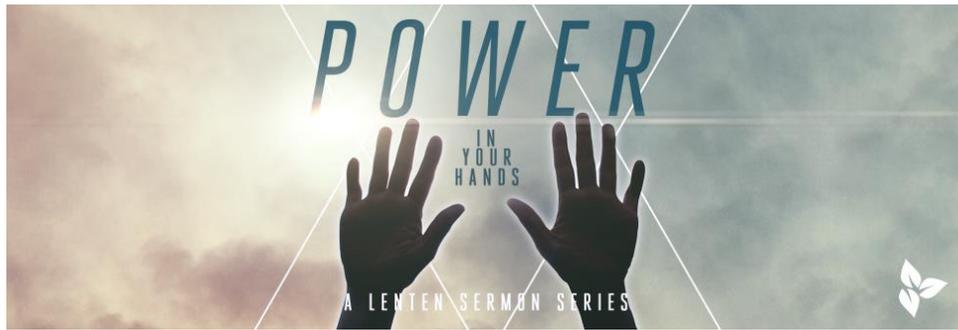
Read aloud from Exodus 23:20-24 and Romans 13:4

These scriptures paint a pretty strong picture that there have been times, when God commanded His people to destroy their enemies.

- How does **this** sit with you?
- Is this just an “Old Testament” principle?

Have someone read aloud Matthew 5:43-48.

- How does **this** sit with you?
- How do these verses from Exodus/Romans and Matthew seem to be at odds with each other?
- Think about the nature of Jesus/God. How would you reconcile the teachings from these two verses?



Talk about the following words used in these verses (explore *your* thoughts about their meanings):

- Hate
- Love
- Enemy
- Neighbor
- Persecute

Jesus warned the Pharisees in all four Gospels that they were distorting the word of God in a way that abused the power they had been entrusted with. Read aloud from Matthew 23:1-12.

- Can you draw any parallels between the Pharisees' and Sadducees' actions and ISIS' actions?
- The Pharisees and Sadducees, among others, used their power to persecute and kill Jesus and His disciples. Did Jesus love or hate them?

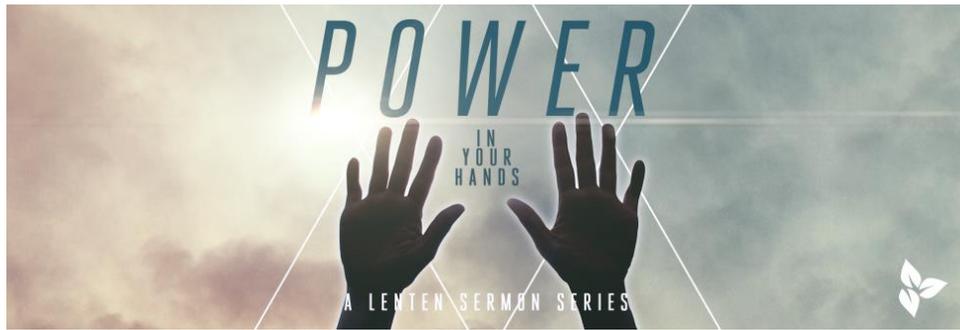
The sermons from this weekend drew our attention to the brutal killing by ISIS of 21 Coptic Christians in Libya last month. Christian persecution is on the rise around the globe.

- What are we to do about/for the persecuted church?
- Can you think of any concrete things Christians should/could be doing?
- 2 Timothy 3:12 says that "In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Do you fear that the ISIS brand of persecution could impact your life more directly in the future?

The sermon asked us, "What should we do about ISIS?" while reminding us that how we respond to this type of evil may give us clues as to how we should respond to some of the other forms of corrupted power plaguing us today.

We were challenged by a great dynamic tension. On one hand, we saw a biblical example of vanquishing the enemy. On the other, we saw power being used very differently (as in Luke 22:51, where Simon Peter had just taken up the sword to defend Jesus against His persecutors and he hacked off one of the arresting soldier's ears, to which Jesus responded, "No more of this!" And in Luke 23:24 at the crucifixion, Jesus says, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do?")

[see questions on next page]



- What answers were suggested to the question, “What should we do about ISIS?” during the sermon?
- What are some Biblically acceptable responses that have enough “power” to vanquish our enemy, while also allowing room for grace to overcome evil?

Your Next Steps:

- Consider this quote by Brian Zahnd, “If the only way of responding to the evil of injustice is retaliation and revenge, we conspire with the powers of darkness to keep the world an ugly place.”
- Hitting back only keeps evil in circulation. Prayerfully ask God each morning this week to show you where and when you can respond with grace instead of “hitting back.”
- The persecuted church is desperately in need of your prayers and support. Each evening before you go to bed, pray for the Christians around the world that are this very minute, living in bondage, fear and suffering terribly under the abuse of power. Ask God to show you any concrete steps you can take to help support our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ.