

For Whom the Bell Tolls
Fairview Texas Church of God
May 14, 2011

Osama Bin Laden is dead. I am comfortable that he is no longer a threat to America, but I doubt that the threat of Al Qaida is gone. The worst may be yet to come. Yesterday, a retaliation attack killed 80 people in Pakistan. Evil will always be with us. The killing of Bin Laden reminds me of the adage “the solution to every problem simply changes the problem”. Now that he is gone, the rest of the world will be facing new problems while the radical Muslims find their new leader and formulate new plans.

John Donne lived in England. from 1573-1631. He:

- Was born in 1573
- Abandoned the Catholic faith in favor of the Church of England
- Was a chaplain to King James I
- Was the dean of Saint Paul’s Cathedral after 1621
- Died in 1631 at 58

In 1624, at age 51, confined to his bed with a series of illnesses, he hears the bells of the church adjoining, and is thereby reminded of death and the transiency of life. See if you can picture the situation at that time.

- There were no glass windows.
- Windows were open gaps in the walls.
- John Donne lies on his bed.
- An open window is above and to the side.
- He can’t see out.
- Dim overcast light comes in during the day.
- His mind wanders – thinking about his life and the lives of his family and friends.
- On occasion of a death, he hears the bell from the tower of a nearby church.
- He wonders who died
- Was it a family member?
- Was it a friend?

He then wrote Devotions upon Emergent Occasions - divided into “meditations”. From “Meditation 17” comes an excerpt used by Ernest Hemingway to title a book which was made into a movie in the late ‘50s or early ‘60s

**NO MAN IS AN ISLAND, ENTIRE OF ITSELF;
EVERY MAN IS A PIECE OF THE CONTINENT, A PART OF THE MAIN;
IF A CLOUD BE WASHED AWAY BY THE SEA, EUROPE IS THE LESS,
AS WELL AS IF A PROMONTORY WERE,
AS WELL AS IF A MANOR OF THY FRIENDS OR OF THINE OWN WERE;
ANY MAN’S DEATH DIMINISHES ME, BECAUSE I AM INVOLVED IN MANKIND;
AND THEREFORE NEVER SEND TO KNOW FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS;
IT TOLLS FOR THEE.**

Let’s look at Biblical verses to relate to this poem.

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**NO MAN IS AN ISLAND, ENTIRE OF ITSELF;
EVERY MAN IS A PIECE OF THE CONTINENT, A PART OF THE MAIN;**

1 Corinthians 12:

- 12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.
- 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
- 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.
- 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?
- 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?
- 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?
- 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.
- 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?
- 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.
- 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."
- 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
- 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,
- 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,
- 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.
- 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.
- 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

No man is an island. We are all part of a larger whole body.

**IF A CLOUD BE WASHED AWAY BY THE SEA, EUROPE IS THE LESS,
AS WELL AS IF A PROMONTORY WERE,
AS WELL AS IF A MANOR OF THY FRIENDS OR OF THINE OWN WERE;**

"The butterfly effect, first described by Lorenz at the December 1972 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C., vividly illustrates the essential idea of chaos theory. In a 1963 paper for the New York Academy of Sciences, Lorenz had quoted an unnamed meteorologist's assertion that, if chaos theory were true, a single flap of a single seagull's wings would be enough to change the course of all future weather systems on the earth.

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By the time of the 1972 meeting, he had examined and refined that idea for his talk, which he titled 'Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil set off a Tornado in Texas?' The example of such a small system as a butterfly being responsible for creating such a large and distant system as a tornado in Texas illustrates the impossibility of making predictions for complex systems; despite the fact that these are determined by underlying conditions, precisely what those conditions are can never be sufficiently articulated to allow long-range predictions."

Will the elimination of Bin Laden cause a worse storm of war in the world? Some analysts say that is entirely possible. Pakistan's parliament has condemned the United States for acting independently. What action will they take?

When we have a friend or family member who dies or is ill, what action do we take?

James 5.

- 13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.
- 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
- 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.
- 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
- 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

Acts 5.

- 33 When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.
- 34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.
- 35 And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.
- 36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.
- 37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.
- 38 "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;
- 39 "but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God."

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What does God think about the United States taking revenge on Bin Laden? I'm not saying that the action was wrong, but I am saying that we should not take it for granted. We need to take action against evil, but the answer is not always simple and evident.

ANY MAN'S DEATH DIMINISHES ME, BECAUSE I AM INVOLVED IN MANKIND;

Psalm 39

- 1 I said, "I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me."
- 2 I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good; And my sorrow was stirred up.
- determined to be quiet and control self about wickedness that was all about; learned his own true feelings
- 3 My heart was hot within me; While I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue:
- 4 "LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am.
- 5 Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.
- life is brief
- 6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them.
- fragile existence
- 7 "And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.
- What do I look for in life?
- 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions; Do not make me the reproach of the foolish.
- 9 I was mute, I did not open my mouth, Because it was You who did it.
- afraid he might say the wrong thing to God
- 10 Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.
- 11 When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty melt away like a moth; Surely every man is vapor.
- God controls everything - even how much wealth or understanding we might have
- Remember, as we have read in Deuteronomy 8 - God humbled Israel in the desert and fed them manna

Psalm 107

- 1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.
- 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,
- enemy = foe = adversity = any trouble
- 3 And gathered out of the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south.
- wanderers in the dark

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- 4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; They found no city to dwell in.
- 5 Hungry and thirsty, Their soul fainted in them.
- 6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He delivered them out of their distresses.
- 7 And He led them forth by the right way, That they might go to a city for a dwelling place.
- 8 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
- 9 For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the hungry soul with goodness.
- He hears the prayer of those in trouble
- 10 Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Bound in affliction and irons-
- suffering is a form of captivity
- 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, And despised the counsel of the Most High,
- 12 Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; They fell down, and there was none to help.
- 13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses.
- 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, And broke their chains in pieces.
- 15 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
- 16 For He has broken the gates of bronze, And cut the bars of iron in two.
- 17 Fools, because of their transgression, And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.
- 18 Their soul abhorred all manner of food, And they drew near to the gates of death.
- 19 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses.
- 20 He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.
- God is merciful in that we don't always get what we deserve
- 21 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
- 22 Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, And declare His works with rejoicing.
- 23 Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters,
- 24 They see the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep.
- 25 For He commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea.
- God can make anything happen

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- 26 They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble.
- 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end.
- 28 Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses.
- 29 He calms the storm, So that its waves are still.
- 30 Then they are glad because they are quiet; So He guides them to their desired haven.
- 31 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
- 32 Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, And praise Him in the company of the elders.
- 33 He turns rivers into a wilderness, And the watersprings into dry ground;
- God has the power to change anything
- 34 A fruitful land into barrenness, For the wickedness of those who dwell in it.
- 35 He turns a wilderness into pools of water, And dry land into watersprings.
- 36 There He makes the hungry dwell, That they may establish a city for a dwelling place,
- 37 And sow fields and plant vineyards, That they may yield a fruitful harvest.
- 38 He also blesses them, and they multiply greatly; And He does not let their cattle decrease.
- 39 When they are diminished and brought low Through oppression, affliction and sorrow,
- 40 He pours contempt on princes, And causes them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way;
- 41 Yet He sets the poor on high, far from affliction, And makes their families like a flock.
- encouragement to those in need
- 42 The righteous see it and rejoice, And all iniquity stops its mouth.
- 43 Whoever is wise will observe these things, And they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.
- invoke wisdom

Deuteronomy 10.

- 12 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,
- 13 "and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

Deuteronomy 11

- 16 "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them,

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Philippians 2

- 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

A few hours ago, Matthew called here and talked with Nita. A few weeks ago he asked about her father and his name. She told him that his name was John and that he is dead. Today, his first words after “hello” were “John is dead. Bob the dog is dead. Missy is dead. I loved Missy. Beau is dead.” This little eight year old boy has been affected by the deaths of people, a dog and horses. His life has been changed.

Bin Laden is dead, and our lives could change because of his death. Our lives have changed due to the death of people, and maybe animals, that have been in our life.

Because - as John Donne so poetically put it --

**AND THEREFORE NEVER SEND TO KNOW FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS;
IT TOLLS FOR ... YOU.**