



Pastor's Page

"Absorbing Conversation"

It's always a hot house of debate and I feel that I really need to be on my mettle whenever I enter this robust theological arena. I refer of course to the hairdressers! It was no different this week as I walked in for a trim and a chat. I had only just sat down when the first ecclesiastical conundrum came my way! "You're a Christian aren't you?" my hairdresser said and then asked "do you think there will be Sharia law in this country in the next ten years? As I was considering this searching question his female assistant followed up with "Do you have it brushed back or falling into a fringe?" Well this was an even harder question to answer but I said "brushed back I think!" I then said, "Yes I think there is a chance that Sharia law may play a big part in our country in the years ahead". "You know what the answer to Sharia law coming into this country is don't you?" he enquired "No, what is it?" I said, trying to anticipate his answer, "People going back to church!" he said. "Preach it brother" I replied, to which he laughed. He then went into a longish spiel about the 'history' of Islam. As he talked it seemed clear to me that he felt that fundamental Islam was some kind of enemy that had to be defeated. When I got a chance to interject I said "look at the teaching of Jesus though, he said we should love our enemies" He either didn't hear me or chose to ignore it as he then went on to talk about the history of the Church of England! His assistant asked me if I watched the X Factor!!

Afterwards as I walked back to my car (with a smashing new hair cut) I continued to think about the conversation and how I wished I'd said more about Jesus' teaching on loving our enemies and how he demonstrated this truth by dying on the cross. I thought about a young Iranian man who came to our church a few years ago and how this teaching of Jesus had led to his conversion from Islam to Christianity. I thought about our world where hatred and fear dominate many people's lives, where violence and murder are everyday realities where 'war on terror' is seen as a reasonable foreign policy where world military expenditures (money spent on weapons) in 2005 exceeded the staggering amount of 1 trillion dollars!! I thought about how this world, God's world, needs to hear about God's Son and the truth about the cross. Leon Morris (retired Principal of Ridley College Melbourne) says; "The world rejected him and put him on a cross. It did its worst to him. He could have retaliated...but he did not retaliate. He bore the sin of the world absorbed it in his Person. He did not multiply the evil brought into being by the sin of the world, but took it on himself took it out of the way by suffering in his own Person" Margaret Dewey says; "The only way to take away the sin of the world without compounding it is to *take* it; to accept personal responsibility, to *carry the can*, to be the butt of everyone's resentment to accept all that others project upon him – to absorb the impact of sin *without fighting back*. Only so can the vicious circle of action and reaction be broken" This is not the whole story of the death of Jesus but it is an important aspect of the atonement and all that Jesus was doing when He died on the cross for the sins of the world. It's a truth that we desperately need to absorb and share with others.

What a pity that I didn't think about saying all this to my hairdresser! But still if he heeds his own advice, one of these days he might just turn up at our church!!

1st November 2009