

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

3 August 2014

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Psalm 122:2

Topics

A.M. Bible Class:

God is able to save us (Daniel 3)

A.M. Lesson:

Are you prepared to meet your maker?

(John 14:1-6)

P.M. Lesson:

Making your calling and election sure

(2 Peter 1:1-11)

Wednesday:

Singing

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

Don't be found sleeping

R. A. Cole

Mark 13:34-37 RSV. ³⁴*It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning— ³⁶lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Watch."*

Some feel that *the doorkeeper* is only part of the 'scenery' of the parable, and therefore requires no special exegesis. But there is some evidence to show

that the simile of the 'porter' was used by the early church for those engaged in Christian ministry. The master of the house, when he arrives after his long absence, must not find us sleeping, but doing our duty and carrying out the particular task which he has left to us....

[Verse 37] shows us that the command is generalized, not directed only at the Christian ministry or indeed at any group or class within the church. Further, it may be a clear indication that Jesus Himself did not necessarily expect that His second coming would be in the near future, as many modern expositors assume rather than prove. The whole tenor of this parable suggests a long absence.

Can atheism support ethical absolutes?

Roger E. Olson

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/>

Can Atheism Support Ethical Absolutes? Is Ethics without Absolutes Enough?

Whenever I comment on atheism, atheists often, misdirect the discussion by appealing to "bad Christians" and/or "good atheists."

My point is never that atheists are bad people or automatically do bad things because they are atheists. Nor is it ever that people who say they believe in God or claim to be Christians are "better" than atheists. Not at all.

My point has always been, and I will keep saying it, that only belief in God provides good reason to criticize the bad actions of those who claim to believe in God or who claim to be Christians. The reason I can criticize their practices is precisely because we both believe in a higher power, God, whom we both

believe stands above us all as the standard of moral behavior.

An example is Martin Luther King, Jr., who criticized the segregation laws of the South in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail"—laws written and passed and supported by so-called Christians. Some of King's fellow ministers were criticizing him for his civil disobedience. King appealed to a "higher law" above "man's laws." And he didn't just mean written laws; he meant social norms and even social consensuses. Just because the majority believe something is right does not make it so. Just because powerful people believe in and enforce laws does not make them right.

But G. K. Chesterton and/or Feodor Dostoevsky (both are credited with saying it) rightly said that if God does not exist, then everything is permitted. Of course, they didn't mean "permitted by law" or "permitted by social consensus" or "permitted by power." The saying means (whoever actually said it first) that if there is no one, no being, above nature, above humanity, above law and social consensus, then there are no absolutes and the individual is free to make up his own laws and act as he will so long as he is willing to live with the consequences if there are any. (Theism tells him there will be—eventually.)

Whenever I say this, atheists rage, but their objections miss the point entirely. The point is not that atheists will inevitably act out in bad ways (whatever that means) or become bad people (whatever that means). The point is that there is no one and no thing to point to to criticize and condemn individuals' or society's acts except laws, social norms, social consensus, nature, consequences, etc. None of these, though, provide ethical absolutes.

I have read Kai Nielsen's *Ethics without God* and similar treatises that attempt to establish atheist ethics, but, in the end, they do not provide any solid ground for criticizing or condemning evil actions. They provide only relative ground for it. In a world of Hitlers and Pol Pots and The Lord's Resistance Army, that's not sufficient.

Of course atheists can choose or claim absolutes, but their assertions of the absoluteness of their ethical norms are empty because everything except God changes. Appeals to "compassionate genes" get them nowhere in the face of someone who is determined to get ahead at others' expense.

I often suspect that atheists who debate me simply don't understand what I am saying. So far as I am concerned, ethics without absolutes is feeble, flexible, weak in the face of evil. Only an appeal to someone transcendent to nature, its creator and moral governor, can state with force that a Hitler is absolutely wrong—whether he wins or loses. Appeals to nature and reason alone cannot counter power. A powerful person determined to do evil will brush them aside as irrelevant. Calling him a sociopath or a moral imbecile will not touch him because he knows definitions of such things change and, if he is determined to pursue survival, reproduction and pleasure (the only three impulses nature alone universally provides) at others' expense, he will see no reason to bow to labels and epithets. In the absence of any appeal to transcendence (purpose, ultimate judgment) only laws will affect him, but what if he is the one who makes the laws? Or he knows how to circumvent them?

I don't really expect to have any influence on militant atheists; my arguments against atheism are aimed only at those "on the fence," so to speak, who are not convinced that belief in God is socially, ethically important.

Special Request

Please refrain from wearing supplemental fragrances and colognes to services. Some of us are sensitive to perfumes even in light application. In a setting such as this, sensitive ones find it difficult to escape the fragrance clouds and to find fresh air.

News

Dave Morse passed away on Tuesday, July 22.

Tatyana Knowlton is visiting family in Russia and Ukraine.

John and Sharon Cunningham are traveling.

Esther, Nysha and Sara Atchley are traveling.

Prayer List:

Bill and Barbara Eisenberg, H.L.

Boling, Mike and Sandy Cavasos,

Nic and Ani Self, Richard Tuey.

