

January 13, 2015

Dear Grace Church Family and Friends,

As most of you probably know, this past Sunday, over one million people gathered on the streets of Paris in response to the terrorist attacks which killed 17 people. There were presidents and prime ministers and regular ol' people. There were Jews, Christians and Muslims. There were people of all nationalities and races and cultures. It was an incredible sign of unity and solidarity. For those few hours, people put aside their differences and recognized their common humanity. They understood that we are all in this together. We are all connected. We are all children of the same God.

How I wish that feeling would continue.

Sadly, I know it won't.

Pretty soon, something will happen, and all the finger-pointing and arguing and fighting will start up again. Solidarity will be replaced by division. Instead of seeing what unites us, we will see what differentiates us: the way we talk, the way we look, where we come from, what we believe. All those things that make us unique and precious will become barriers, preventing us from appreciating and understanding and respecting one another. Rather than something to celebrate, our differences will become a source of skepticism, fear and anger.

It would be easy to think only other people behave this way, but if we are honest with ourselves, we know that is not true. Christians act this way, too. The history of Christianity is marked by bias, prejudice, exclusion, and oppression. Christians have not always acted very Christian.

But, that is not the way of Jesus.

One of the most profound theological statements I ever heard was: *if you draw a line, dividing yourself from someone else, Jesus always stands on the other side of that line.*

I believe that to be true, and all I know is - I want to stand on the side of Jesus.

See you in church,
Andrew