*Gracious God, we come to you this morning as the Prince of Peace - as the God of justice, mercy, and hope for the world.*

*We remember your radical call on the church to love all people as our neighbors, whether they are our allies or our enemies. We remember your radical call to be peacemakers and work for reconciliation.*

*We grieve all forms of violence that mar the image of your goodness that is present in all humanity.*

*God, we pray for an immediate end to violence, for a lasting and just peace in the Middle East. We pray for the most vulnerable: the sick, the wounded, children, and the elderly. For all those living with deep trauma, anxiety, and fear.*

*We pray for healthcare workers, aid agencies, and all who serve people in need.*

*And we pray for the combatants, those who are in harm's way, on all sides of this conflict. Where possible, protect them from danger. Be with their loved ones, as they live with deep anxiety and fear.*

*We pray for peace and comfort for all who are suffering, knowing that all the people of the earth are made in your image and are loved beyond measure.*

*All these things we pray in the name of Christ, our Savior. Amen.*

Siblings in Christ, as I write this article, our nation and the world holds its collective breath, waiting to see what will happen. Almost certainly, we will continue to see those on the margins - and those of us in the middle - continue to be squeezed economically, as Iran reportedly closes the Strait of Hormuz. It’s likely that there will be some sort of retaliatory attack. It’s also likely that we will find ourselves embroiled in another protracted war in the Middle East. (Robert Reich, among others, has a blog post on Substack dated June 22 that is worth reading.)

But how are we, as people of God, called to respond? How are we, as followers of Christ, called to react to a conflict that will almost certainly lead to anti-Muslim rhetoric, and an increase in anti-Muslim violence? How are we, as people who pray for peace, called to respond to this unprovoked attack against a country whose government has been hostile to the US for decades?

With radical love. With a call to peace. With the memory that Isaac and Ishmael were siblings, both children of Abraham, and with the knowledge that even though our faiths may be different, we worship the same God - whether we name the Almighty One God, Allah, YHWH, or any other word in any other language. By recognizing that we believe that ALL people are created in God’s image. ALL people are our neighbors.

The prayer that begins this article, adapted from a prayer posted to the Clergy Coaching Network Facebook page on the morning after the bombing, is the one we began worship with that morning.

How can we respond, as children of God, as followers of Christ, as people called to radical love and obedience?

We can pray. We can speak out. We can be bold in our proclamation of the gospel - that Jesus calls us to love all our neighbors - even the ones who don’t worship like we do. Even the ones who disagree with us. Even the ones who spout hate or promote violence or start wars.

But loving them doesn’t mean agreeing with everything they say. Loving them means holding them accountable for their harmful words and actions. Loving them means telling it like it is.

In his Heidelberg Disputations, Martin Luther wrote, “A theology of glory *(which desires power through works)* calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross *(righteousness comes only from God)* calls the thing what it actually is.”

So when we are bold enough to call the thing what it actually is - when we are bold enough to call evil by its name - God is the firm foundation on which we stand. Christ is the one who gives us the courage. And the Spirit is the breath through which we find our voice.