GPS
Gather Pray Support

October 6, 2019
Making Sense of the Bible: Violence and the Bible

Worship Scriptures:
Exodus 32:27-28, Joshua 10:40

sermon points to remember

Connect
Jesus is grieved by human violence. Yet Old Testament passages where God commands violence and even genocide stand in stark contrast to the Noah story and to Jesus' call to love your enemies. These violent passages not only trouble thoughtful Christians but they give fodder to the new atheists who assert, sometimes rightly, that religion is the source of much of the violence in the world." –Adam Hamilton, "Making Sense of the Bible"

Reflection and Study

Think:
Why does God seem so merciful and compassionate in the New Testament but seems angry and harsh in the Old Testament? That is an over simplistic asking of the question. There are 23,000 verses in the Old Testament. We are talking about a few hundred that portray God in ways that would cause us to ask that question. The book of Revelation in the New Testament also depicts God's judgment that appears violent. And yet, over and over again we find God portrayed in the Old and New Testament as merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Are there passages of scripture that have caused you to question how God could will violence? How do you reconcile that with a God of love?

additional insight >>>

For Additional Insight
Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39) Jesus did not ignore or discard the Hebrew Scriptures. But he did identify the ones of its many different strands that gave the truest picture of God's purposes for the human family. Our natural tendency is to feel entitled to some extra privileges for serving God, a dose of blessing that those who don't follow God don't get. But Jesus' said God "makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous" (verse 45)? Think of the "unrighteous" people you know. How might you live more generously toward them?

Final Application:
Read John 14:27. Jesus was a person of peace and wanted his followers to be people of peace. Choose to spend some quiet time together with your family. Maybe you want to take a brief walk. You might each want to spend some time reading. Maybe you prefer listening to music. Encourage everyone to ask God to calm their hearts and fill them with peace during their quiet time. Ask each person to find a word or an item during the quiet time that will help him or her carry that peace every day. Share your experiences as a family and pray God's peace for one another. Move toward beginning each day asking God to help you be a person of peace.