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Export date: Fri Oct 30 10:51:28 2026 / +0000 GMT

Christian Perspectives: Our world is hungry for a blessing

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Jesus chose a way of life that was misunderstood by many.

He sometimes scandalized the leaders of his faith community.

Religious people of his day questioned why he and his friends did more feasting than fasting; why he attended parties at the homes of people they would consider not worthy of their company; why he included women, tax collectors, and common labourers in his inner circle; and why he treated enemies ? Samaritans ? as beloved neighbours, sisters and brothers.

They did not understand this rabbi ? a spiritual leader who preached love for the outsider, the ones on the margins of society, for the widows, orphans and foreigners. They had become so caught in the subordinate rules ? the trappings of their faith ? that they had forgotten God's message for them. Jesus reminded them that what God most wants is this: ?So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.? (Matthew 7.12)

I wonder if we as a society have lost our way too and are in danger of forgetting God's deep message, the basis of Jesus' teaching.

We have transitioned into a period that some are calling the ?post-truth? era, a time when ?alternative facts? ? formerly called ?lies? ? are an acceptable way to support one's preferred version of just about anything.

Last fall's United States election was one more large step into a world where reality has come unhinged from accurate facts, information, observations, research ? all that we normally depend upon to understand what is true and dependable and worthy.

What would have been considered ridiculous or laughable, or even a sign of mental illness, now is allowed to hold great power in our world.

Messages that instill fear or express contempt license the open expression of prejudice against persons of a different race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or political identity.

There is general agreement that the violence inflicted during worship in the Quebec City mosque is one of many violent acts resulting from increasingly open expressions of xenophobia.

How do we regain our balance and our sanity?

Perhaps we begin by committing to the exhausting often tenuous work of discerning what is real and true and kind in every situation. And, then we must find the courage to condemn prejudice and discrimination and violence.

What does our faith offer in the search for a better way?

Many have begun also to call this the post-Christian or post-religion era in our culture. I don't think it's an accident that so many of our strong social programs ? universal education and healthcare, employment insurance, welfare, disability allowances, child protection laws, work place safety standards, old age pensions, a stable banking system, commitments to foreign aid ? came into being during a time when the socially acceptable place to be on Sunday morning was in some sort of church.

If you were Jewish, you went on Saturday; if Muslim, on Friday. In our places of worship we were exposed weekly to important ideas that shaped our understanding and our way of life:

God is love; God loves diversity; all humanity is one family born of that great Love. We live in intimate relationship with our Creator and one another, with every living creature and our earthly home.

We are called to practice kindness and compassion especially for all who need our kindness and compassion most. We are called to live the ?Golden Rule? doing for others what we would have them do for us and not doing to others what we would not want them to do to us.

We are called to notice injustice and do everything in our power to make justice a reality. This is not the justice of crime and punishment; but, rather the justice of fair distribution of resources. Conflict begins where there is inequity and unfairness. We are called to share all resources equitably and sustainably.

These messages are the gift and blessing our religious traditions continue to offer today. They show us how to regain our balance and our sanity. Our world is in great need right now of exactly this blessing. The world is hungry for this blessing. Together we can bless the world by our efforts to live into the way Jesus taught.