

## Did Jesus Sanction Self-Defense?

Jesus did not sanction self-defense by violent means. We might note a few facts that bear on this question of self-defense. Jesus foretold to his disciples that opposition and persecution would sometimes be their lot as they go out to do missionary work for him. When they are persecuted they should rejoice and be glad that they can suffer for their faith in him (Matthew 5:10-12). When they find themselves persecuted in one city, instead of defending themselves by force, they must flee to another (Matthew 10:23). When they see their country about to be invaded they are to flee to the mountains and hide themselves (Matthew 24:16). Never does Jesus instruct his disciples to defend themselves by force.

Jesus never defended himself by violent means against attempts made upon his life. At Nazareth (Luke 4:28-30) and several times at Jerusalem (John 8:59; 10:39) he escaped from hands intent upon murdering him by slipping away and hiding himself from his assailants. In so doing Jesus was not a coward, afraid to face his enemies, nor a weakling yielding to his attackers. He simply would not descend to the low moral level on which his enemies acted, in order to resist them with evil means which they used to attack him. When Peter drew his sword to defend his master in Gethsemane, Jesus told him not to use it, saying, "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword". (Matthew 26:52) -- NGA

### My First Experiences at Western State Hospital

There were men leaning idly against the corridor walls; there were men lying fully prone, their eyes fixed absently on the ceiling; there were men slouched everywhere in the most grotesque positions. Here and there men muttered indiscernibly; while others occasionally burst forth with rapid, terrible curses. Still other men were loudly singing badly misworded versions of familiar songs. Over it all seemed to hang a not-quite-tangible air of tragedy.

I think it was that feeling that stunned me most, the first morning I entered the ward to which I had been assigned at Western State Hospital. Something that seems to press against you; yet something you can't quite describe. When I locked the door behind me, I had an inescapable feeling that here lay a world entirely new and strange to me.

That was a little more than a month ago. You who have been here many times that long will probably laugh at this, but already I'm beginning to feel like a veteran-attendant! I don't know just what has brought about this change; it's difficult for me to analyze. But somehow each of those men on my ward has revealed things in his life that make me feel I know him.

The man who astonished me with the very emphasis of his curses seems to be a very ordinary individual, aside from that one peculiar trait. Perhaps it was his folks coming to see him; maybe it was the way his wife rushed up to kiss him. Why, not so long ago he must have been loved and respected, just as we are today!

Or perhaps it was what the minister said the other night. I rather liked that; the way he made you feel that maybe the job you were doing right now was the one God had chosen for you. And then I got to thinking--have I, too, been going out around the poor traveler on the road to Jericho, because I was afraid, or perhaps didn't want to bother? Do you suppose that's what God sees me doing, as he's with me at my work each day?

No! the feeling of being in a different world each time I enter the ward isn't as strong anymore. Sometimes a man tells me that he's soon going home, and the old feeling of tragedy comes back to me again, when I think how unlikely it is that his dreams will ever come true. What's the use; how can there ever be hope to be normal again? And then I am reminded that the good Samaritan never stopped ministering to the poor old traveler, just because there was no assurance that he'd some day be well again.

Perhaps it's all these things together that has made me think so differently of those sick, broken men. And maybe it's just that I can't forget those words the Master said, "Whatsoever ye do unto the least of these...ye have done it unto me." --GDR