

The Killing of our Children

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.” (Matthew 2:16-18).

The killing of 19 elementary school children and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas was a nightmare beyond nightmares. It seems far beyond our imagination and our human limits to imagine someone would do such a thing. Families are understandably inconsolable over the horrific events inflicted upon their children and families in a senseless shooting. It is, of course, the deadliest elementary school shooting since Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut about a decade ago. Apparently, the gunman acted alone but initiated this horror by first shooting his grandmother and then posting threats on social media before he crashed his grandmother's vehicle at the elementary school and began executing everyone in his pathway.

Unfortunately, these events are not new. Back in the first century, when Jesus came into the world, we had a similar horror inflicted on an innocent community by a dictatorial maniac named Herod. Considering the potential threat of a new king rising from among the Jews, Herod had every infant, two-years-old and under, slaughtered based on when the magi had reported. The startling, and somewhat disturbing insertion was that this fulfilled what the prophet Jeremiah spoke about in Jeremiah 31:15, which is directly quoted in Matthew 2:18. A detail for another article.

Obviously, how do we *begin* to understand such things in our world?

First, there is evil in the world, and that evil infects all humanity. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. (Ecclesiastes 9:3). If you cling to the idea that humanity is basically “good” then you might be shell-shocked by inhuman behavior. Unfortunately, the Scriptures are clear – “There is none who does good. There is not even one.” (Romans 3:12). The issue is not just an inability to do good, it is the propensity to do evil.

Secondly, all human beings are broken, dysfunctional and messed up. The difference here is that those who have been badly hurt, abused, and exploited end up with much pain and bitterness in their life. If that is not dealt with, they inflict that pain on others. The old saying is

true: broken, hurt people end up hurting and breaking other people. Those who have been hurt badly end up hurting others badly. The struggle is how we label people who hurt others. Are they really messed up because they have been the victims of the moral evil of others, or are they just evil and hurt others? To some extent the answer is both. People struggle with the question, “Is punishing those who have been victims is right to do because they are acting out of their pain?” Can we really punish or condemn people who are severely broken? Evil people are much easier to deal with because they get what they deserve.

We all have our own brokenness and evil that infects our heart. The evil that invades and fills our hearts is unfixable. We do have the ability to manage and restrain our “stuff”, to one degree or another, but we can all say or do things that inflict some incremental amount of evil on others. It can be judgment, bitterness, condemnation and a host of other expressions of our own brokenness. Sometimes we surprise even ourselves (and others) by acting way outside of what we think we are capable, and doing things that we instantly try to defend, “that is not me... I don’t know why I did that”.

The ultimate hope in any context is God’s love demonstrated in Christ’s sacrifice. Christians are not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. We are only “perfect” in God’s eyes because of the righteousness of Christ. But the whole journey of life is about our personal transformation from “finding our own way” to surrendering to living God’s way.

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