



Lord Have Mercy on Us

February 16, 2018—Vol. 12, No. 7

I've been wrestling with how to respond since Wednesday afternoon. It happened again: another school shooting. It's tragic. It's heartbreaking. It's beyond comprehension.

Author

The weekly eNews is provided by CGGC Executive Director Lance Finley



We tend to run to our respective corners fairly quickly in moments like these. Some of my friends are tired of “thoughts and prayers” and are calling for legislative action: tighter gun control, new laws, more and mental health funding. Other friends are quick to point out that guns don't kill people, only people kill people. They claim it's not a gun problem, but a heart problem.

My social media newsfeed quickly fills up with different friends debating back and forth, holding fast to the merits of their respective positions. I don't find these debates very helpful and I certainly don't see anyone changing their minds and switching from their already established position on the issue. Thus, I struggle to think how I can help bring anything different in this moment.

How do we respond to this moment in a manner that reflects the words, the wisdom, and the ways of Jesus? How do we respond as followers of Jesus?

We can start by acknowledging a few things:

- More legislation is not sufficient to curb the violence and evil we see all too often on display in our culture. We have laws in place now that are not followed or enforced. More laws and restrictions aren't likely to change the minds and actions of those who intend to do great harm to others.
- While it's true that guns don't kill people, guns are tools designed specifically for lethal purposes. A madman armed with 100 rocks or a single sword is much less lethal than the same man armed with an AR-15 or AK-47. The heart may drive the decision, but the choice of weapon often determines the potential deadliness of the attack. The availability of these weapons is staggering.
- The enemy takes great joy in death, destruction and division. We need to focus on the right enemy.

- There are God-fearing brothers and sisters in Christ on both sides of this debate. I have brothers and sisters who conceal and carry while others choose to abstain from owning any weapon. The enemy loves to see brothers and sisters divided.
- The energy spent debating such things on social media rarely produces any good fruit.

So how do we respond?

We need to mourn with those who mourn. We need to listen and seek to understand far more than we speak and seek to be understood – shouting over our opponents isn't getting us anywhere. We need to work toward a world where these kind of events are rare exceptions, not increasingly normal.

I think more than anything else, we need to keep reorienting ourselves to the King and His kingdom. We need to recalibrate our values and the decisions we make to the values of King Jesus and His kingdom. Romans 12:9-21 would be a good place to start. I'm afraid in our quest for safety and security, we often lose sight of the values of Jesus and His Kingdom. The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:38-48 are counter-cultural words for us, they are difficult words and counter-intuitive words in times like these, but we believe that it's Jesus and Jesus alone who is able to address our heart issues. It's through His kingdom, experienced by our repenting and believing, by recalibrating our thinking and our actions that we're going to see things change in our world.

Lastly, don't give up the hope we have in Christ. I long for the day described in Isaiah 2:4 when these tools of destruction and death will be refashioned into tools that bring life and productivity.

One last suggestion in all of this. So much of what we're seeing in our world flows out of deep pain and trauma and it creates a never ending cycle of more pain and more trauma. Our friends at the Center for Parent and Youth Understanding (www.cpyu.org) are offering help on this front. On March 10th in Paradise, PA they are offering their seminar "Hope and Healing for Broken Kids". You can find all the information here: <https://cpyu.org/hopeandhealing/>. There's a fair number of folks in the CGGC who live within a short drive of Paradise and I'd encourage you to get equipped on helping those who are struggle with the pain and brokenness they've experienced in their short lives. It's a proactive step of helping bring healing to the pain and trauma before it grows into the violent outbursts we witness far too often in our culture today.

Christ's Peace,

Lance