

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 2:16-18

SERMON:

This week we witnessed unspeakable tragedy. Just down the road from us a young woman who identified as a man, walked into a Christian school and gunned down 3 young children and 3 adults.

The nation has watched and grieved alongside these families, friends, and school community. The apparent motive of the killer has been identified as an intentional attack against Christianity. The individual identified as transgender and because this school, along with the majority of Christians adhering to the Bible, doesn't affirm this lifestyle, she went into the building and started shooting.

It's unthinkable to be the parents of those children. It's unthinkable to be the family of those adults. It's an absolute tragedy.

And, friends, this didn't happen in New York City, Seattle, London, or Somalia or Iran, but in Nashville. This could have just as easily been in Lebanon and at TJC. That's how real and close this is. So the question is: what kind of things should we be thinking and remembering during times like these?

Scripture Exegesis: Matthew 2:16-18

VS 16-18 -- 16 When Herod saw that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was filled with rage. Sending orders, he put to death all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, according to the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: 18 "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Herod was a paranoid king. He had many sons vying for his spot when he died. He constantly looked over his shoulder. The children and their mothers poisoned one

another in an effort to jockey for position and to be the heir. In fact, Herod was so ruthless, that as he was dying, he ordered that many of the prominent Jewish leaders be gathered up and killed. Why? Because he knew the Jews would be happy he was dead, so in order to ensure weeping at the time of his death, he killed many prominent leaders so Israel would have something to cry about.

This is the Herod that heard from the Magi about a king being born in Bethlehem and sends orders to kill all baby boys two years old or under. Hundreds of young boys are murdered because this man hates Christ.

How many times have you heard this story without stopping to consider the depths of sorrow of the families who experienced that loss first hand? What reads as a detail of a story that quickly continues on would have been an event that changed the lives of those families forever. The fathers and mothers of those children would grieve the loss of those children until their dying day. This is why Matthew writes that this fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy of Rachel (Jacob's wife) weeping for her children. They're gone. Imagine the wailing in Bethlehem. They likely sounded like the wailing in Nashville.

Many claim Stephen is the first martyr in Christian history, but this is not true. The sons of Bethlehem murdered by Herod's hatred of Christ are the true first martyrs. And the six killed in Nashville this week are counted among the number.

Revelation 6:9-11 -- When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Those killed as martyrs surround the throne of the Lamb. They cry "how long" until their blood is avenged. But their rest is a little longer, the number and time of fulfillment has not yet arrived.

So the evil we saw this week is not unprecedented. No, in fact, there is precedent throughout history of people killing others because they hated the LORD. What shocks us is that it has happened so close to home. What shocks us is that it happened here in America.

How are we to think about these things? What should we remember during these evil times?

1. Mourn with those who mourn.

Romans 12:15 -- *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

Weep with those who weep. Mourn with those who mourn. This tragedy should cut us. Let's guard our hearts from growing calloused and cold from these types of calamities. This is not right. Things should not be this way. Never normalize this kind of barbarism.

2. Remember the world will hate you.

John 15:19 -- *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

Why will the world hate us? Because the world seeks independence from the rule and reign of God. They don't want to hear His commands or abide in His laws. When we live by them and proclaim them to the world, rather than getting with the program like everyone else, it produces hatred toward us.

Please hear me...you can be as winsome and kind as you possibly can (and you should be), but if you think that will win you favor with the world and make your beliefs palatable to the enemies of God, you are deceived. When you see events like Covenant, remember it is driven by hatred of Christ; therefore, they hate you.

3. Pray for those who persecute you.

Matthew 5:44 -- *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*

The natural response to this sort of evil is to respond in kind. We want vengeance. But the LORD reminds us that vengeance is His. We don't take revenge or retaliate with violence. We pray.

We pray for our enemies. We pray for those who persecute us.

What kind of prayers?

- prayers for salvation
- prayers that their evil would be restrained
- prayers for God's judgment to fall

4. Preach Christ in the evil day.

Ephesians 6:13 -- *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

The "evil day" is described in this text. What is that day? It is the day of unbridled lawlessness and wickedness. We are seeing that day. And what is needed now more than ever is the preaching of Christ to the world.

Only as a commitment to Christ sweeps our nation can we see this evil turned back. We need to recapture an allegiance to the Lord Jesus and live for Him as king. If Christ is not recognized as King, and lived for in the world, chaos will abound. It is always a choice between Christ or Chaos. We have Chaos. We need Christ. That comes as we preach Christ in and through our lives.

5. Long for the King's return.

Revelation 22:20 -- *He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

The Bible ends with these words. Why? Because they are the words we need echoing in our minds as we live in this world. We need His return to usher in the restoration of all things.

Tragedies like we've experienced this week remind us again that this world is not our home. We need Jesus to come and make all things new. This prayer is stated as an example to be prayed by us. This is the prayer echoing in the hearts of these grieving parents and families today. And it ought to be the prayer ringing in the hearts of all believers.

Come, Lord Jesus, come. Put this world to rights once and for all.

REFLECT:

- ❖ How have you been feeling this week? Contact one of the pastors at TJC if you need to talk.
- ❖ What questions do you think of when something like this happens?
- ❖ Where do you find comfort when tragedy strikes?
- ❖ How does God use suffering for our good and His glory?

RESPOND:

- ❖ What should our response be in the wake of a tragedy like this?
- ❖ John 16:33 - *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Romans 8:18 - *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Elder - **John Page**
- ❖ Ministries - Adoption Ministry
- ❖ NAMB Church Planter - **Ben Parks III** - Cincinnati, OH - Pillar of Truth Ministries
- ❖ Unreached People Group (UPG): **Ganja Balanta in Senegal**
- ❖ Population: 130,000
- ❖ Christian: 5.0%
- ❖ Evangelical: 0.6%
- ❖ Primary Religion: Ethnic Religions
- ❖ Primary Language: Balanta-Ganja