

## JACK'S CORNER

In lieu of my traditional question/answer format, and as our church and school counselor, I want to offer some thoughts (not an exhaustive discourse) regarding the Las Vegas shooting. Although I address primarily those of the Christian faith in this article, my prayer is that everyone might glean something that helps them understand and act.

**I don't want to minimize in any way the pain and the evil that was done.** I was truly saddened and angered by the event itself, but I was not surprised by this evil act. To me, it was not "unimaginable"... a word used by the Media too often these days. On the contrary, we Christians should be surprised these kinds of events are not happening far more often. I can imagine a world far darker and more violent.

As believers, more than anyone else, we should understand the human heart's capacity for evil. The veneer of goodness in humanity is extremely thin. If not for the mercy of God and His restraining hand in our world, imagine what we would be doing to each other. Sound darkly cynical? "The heart is desperately wicked", the prophet Jeremiah says.

In our prideful arrogance and naiveté, most of us think ourselves incapable of the same kind of actions as the Las Vegas murderer. Given different circumstances in our own lives, we too might peer down from a high-rise, gun in hand, for the purpose of murder. How little most of us know our own hearts. As I ponder this event, I am drawn inextricably and humbly toward my Savior. How I need Him! How our world needs Him!

What an opportunity for God's people to reach out to a lost and confused world. What will we do? What words will we say? Who will we be? I remember the morning after, a clergyman was interviewed and asked why things like this happen, and how can we understand these kinds of events. I was so hopeful. Now was the church's chance to shine. The world was asking us Christians, and we have the answers! He said: "We don't know why these things happen." Then: "How can we understand something like this?" My heart sank. I don't know why this Pastor said what he did, but I think he missed a chance to shine. I know he couldn't give an hour discourse, but he gave the impression that the church is just as "in the dark" as the rest of the world, and that we have nothing to offer. I wanted to scream.

The fact is, there is an answer to the "why?", and there is a way to understand this event, and we Christians know it! Sadly, people often don't really want the answer; if given it. They are generally unwilling to accept it. Often, the question "why?" is not really a question at all. It is a cry of the heart and a demand that God explain himself. Would any answer really satisfy us in the midst of our pain? Instead, it is our frustration speaking, and disappointment that God is not the God we want him to be... nor does He do things the way we think He should. He lets things happen, or even causes things to happen, that call into question His goodness and strength... maybe even His existence. Often, we neither want nor accept His answers. We struggle to understand Him.

**Most people have a set of false assumptions about life, people, and God that they believe are true.**

**1. People say: all bad events should be prevented. That's God's job!** Most of us believe the logic of this statement is so intuitively obvious; we never challenge its validity. **God says:** In my love, I can use the all bad events as opportunities for good. I will use them to shape my people into the image of Christ. I will draw them to complete dependence on me. I will make

them look beyond the here and now so that they long for heaven...where all evil will be erased forever. For now, you all live in a sinful and fallen world; the Garden (Eden) is no more!

2. **People say: God's priorities should be the same as ours.** The elimination of pain and the maximization of pleasure are usually number one and two on our list of priorities. Happiness and smooth sailing through life are the ultimate goal. **God says:** I am more concerned with developing faith, bringing my people to true repentance, molding them into the image of my Son, giving them opportunities to help others and having an eternal relationship with their God. (Happiness usually tends to make people forget about God.)

3. **People say: Life should be fair...as we define fairness. God says:** The wages of sin is death. Instead of being "fair," I will give them what they don't deserve.... grace, forgiveness and eternal life. Grace and forgiveness they can have now. Evil will be eradicated when they enter eternal life.

4. **People say: Physical life should always be preserved. God says:** I am far more concerned with spiritual life, and where my people will spend eternity. Physical life is not the lasting reality. Death is not the doorway to nothingness; it is the doorway to paradise!

5. **People say: We are basically good. We don't deserve these kinds of events. God says:** All have sinned and fall short. Collectively and individually, you all will bear the consequences of sin. In this world, you all will have tribulation. But, take heart, I have overcome this world!

If we don't understand or want to believe that God does not think like us, act like us, and share our priorities, we will find it hard to really love, worship and trust him. We might find it hard to believe He exists. When we want relief more than we want relationship with God, we will never truly appreciate what He has done for us by sending His Son. When we want cooperation from God more than we want to worship Him, we will be disappointed by how God behaves.

What will we do? Will we get involved in the lives of our neighbors and share the wonder of the Gospel? What words will we say? What answers do we have? Can we sit with them, weep with them, walk with them and share words of truth and hope? Who will we be? Will we open our hearts, shine as lights, be people of integrity, and lead our neighbors out of darkness? THESE ARE TIMES FOR US TO SHINE! OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS JESUS IN US! We need deep convictions that come from God's Word to transform a world that sits in darkness and shakes its fist as God.

Jack