

A Time to Mourn

Ecclesiastes wrote that there is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Eccl. 3:4). Now is a time to mourn, a time to weep. Now is a time to grieve with those who grieve and hurt with those who hurt. And now is a time to turn to the Lord and ask Him to have mercy on our nation and heal our land.

Who can imagine the pain of the people of Sutherland Springs, Texas, a town of just a few hundred?

Already 26 are confirmed dead, ranging in age from 5 to 72, all them shot while worshiping in their local Baptist church. One of them was the pastor’s 14-year-old daughter.

Twenty more are reported wounded, meaning that most of those in the service were shot. Can we even begin to wrap our minds around this?

Every family in this town has been affected. Dreams have been destroyed. Plans for a bright future have been demolished. What a massive, unspeakable tragedy.

You wake up on a Sunday morning on a beautiful fall morning, you head over to the church building to sing to the Lord and pray and hear a message. And you never make it home. Or your spouse or child or grandparent never makes it home. Or you’re airlifted from the service in critical condition; your whole life turned upside down.

Can we let this sink in until our hearts are breaking? Can we let this sink in until we share some of the burden with our brothers and sisters in Texas?

At times like this, we are consumed with questions, wanting to know why and how.

What we do know about the murderer? What motivated him? Why

did he launch his attack on a Sunday morning? What could have been done to prevent this? Why does God allow such things to happen?

Those are all valid questions, and there will be plenty of time to seek valid answers. But now is a time to mourn and pray. Can we at least take a few minutes to stop what we're doing, turn off the news and cry out to the Lord?

At times like this, it's all too easy to politicize the pain, to argue for stricter gun control or to argue for better church security or to blame one political party or another.

All this has already been done today, setting the internet on fire with tweets and countertweets, none of which I will link here, since that will only distract us or annoy us or enflame us.

Perhaps there's something more constructive we can do right now? Perhaps praying and grieving is more appropriate? Perhaps asking the Lord to help those who are suffering would be a better use of our time, at least for a few minutes?

I understand that both advocates of gun control and advocates of more gun security care about the loss of life and want to prevent it. We are united in the desire to see the carnage stop. But again, there's a time for political debate and there's a time to cease from political debate, at least for a few hours or a day. Now is one of those times where political debate can wait.

There is a community traumatized.

There are bloody bodies lying on the floor of a little church building, which is now an active crime scene.

There are children fighting for their lives in neighboring hospitals.

There are parents and families in shock.

The least we could do is feel some of their pain and ask God for comfort and intervention.

And let's not get into online battles with the mockers who say there's no need to pray, since God didn't stop this from happening in the first place. Don't let them dishonor the name of the Lord we love, the same Lord that these victims and their families loved, the same Lord who is at work even now in the midst of the agony, the same Lord who has welcomed 26 of His children into His heavenly presence.

This is now the second mass shooting in five weeks and the second church shooting in six weeks. (The Las Vegas massacre took place on October 1. The church shooting in Tennessee took place on September 24.) And it's the second mass murder of the week, with the car attack taking place just six days ago. And all this comes on the heels of dozens dying in forest fires and millions being affected by hurricanes. Is this not enough to drive us to our knees?

America is hurting right now, and in many ways, we are a very sick nation. Only God can heal our land.

Turning to Him with all our hearts and souls in repentance and prayer is our only hope—and the only hope of the people of Sutherland Springs.

Let's join them in their grief, as we appeal to our Father for mercy. There's nothing more important we can do.