

Love Brings the Greatest Revenge

Like most people, one of my first reactions upon hearing about the horrific tragedy that took place at the Sandy Hook Elementary School on Dec. 14 was to wonder who on earth could do something like this?

Over the last few weeks I have heard the familiar refrain of psychologists and news anchors calling this kid, Adam Lanza, “mentally ill”, “crazy”, and “deeply disturbed”, and you have to agree that anyone who has the capacity to walk into a classroom of 6- and 7-year-olds and continuously shoot them without any show of remorse is indeed about as mentally deranged and disturbed as anyone walking the planet today.

But as I sat glued to my television, and as my thoughts turned to my own kids who are 11, 8, and 4 years old, horrible pictures floated into my head of someone doing this to them. As an overwhelming sadness overtook me, I once again thought of the kid who did this. My first, honest, gut reaction was not one I am particularly proud of: this guy deserves to burn in hell.

Like many Americans, that night my family and I gathered together and prayed for the victims’ families. My kids dutifully prayed their simple prayers, but it was my daughter, Serenity, who opened my eyes to my own hypocrisy.

“Dear God, please be with the families of the kids who died, please comfort them. And I also pray for the guy who did this, and I ask that you will show him that you still love him.”

That was it, the simple prayer of an 11-year-old girl, and my eyes were opened. My first thought was my earlier assessment, indeed my hope that this kid was paying the ultimate price for his sins. Where I wanted punishment, my daughter asked for

mercy.

Didn't she understand, though, how horrific this act was? Didn't she see that this was somehow different from what other people do? This was from the pit of hell—an act of evil perpetrated on the most defenseless members of society. Didn't my daughter realize that for people like that prayers of mercy are not allowed?

Of course not, because my daughter is 11 and she takes her Bible seriously. When God says to pray for your enemies, she sits down and does it. Meanwhile, her dad won't go there because he's too angry at this enemy of mankind.

It is moments like these where what we believe as Christians is put to the test. It is also moments like these where our utter failure as Christians is most apparent. How many Christians did Adam Lanza come in contact with over the last five years? How many people reached out to him with a kind word? How many saw an introverted, strange kid and thought to invite him to youth group? And assuming he even showed up in a church, how many people ignored him because they had to talk to their friends they already knew, or looked at him askance because he was obviously a different kind of odd?

I'm no psychologist, but it doesn't take Sigmund Freud to figure out that this kid had some deep, dark stuff going on inside his head. I don't think you're going to find a thriving community of friends who knew him well. Instead, the reports coming out now about Adam Lanza are pretty much what you would expect: He was a loner, he was really smart but quite odd, and he didn't have many friends.

In my latest film, *Father of Lights*, Majed el Shafie from One Free World International, said something that underscores what happened in Connecticut. "This world is an unfair place. It's a dark place, but not because people are running around doing evil. It's because the good people sit around and didn't do

something to stop it. In the absence of light, darkness prevails.”

I have no idea if Adam Lanza could have been stopped had the Christians in his community risen up and opened the light of the Father to him. I have no idea if he would have accepted the invitation, and if he would have, if he would have been open to a touch from God.

But I do know this—the greatest revenge we can have as Christians, the only revenge that is ours to give—is to pour out love upon our communities. If this tragedy has shown us anything, it’s that in every community—from the slums to affluent suburbia—there are dying, hurting people who need to be introduced to their heavenly Father. The fact that we can’t get over ourselves to turn on the light for someone is one of the greatest sins of Western Christianity.

So instead of throwing our hands up in disgust as this world goes to hell in a hand basket and begging the Lord to come back quickly before everything gets out of control; and instead of praying that everyone who does unspeakable evil will hurry up and face eternal damnation, what would happen if Christians actually took Christ seriously and became aggressive lovers of people, especially people in our community who we might prefer not to love? After all, if you want to get rid of darkness, you must simply turn on the light.

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