

Was the Colorado Shooting Spiritually Motivated? Yes, But ...

Was there a spiritual motivation to the Colorado shooting? The short answer is yes. When we say things are “spiritually motivated,” we are generally looking for a clear line in the sand. We want answers to why something happened, and if we can locate the motivation within an idea we understand, it can somehow make a modicum of sense.

So we look for motivation. Why would someone walk into a school or anywhere for that matter, and start shooting people?

We could say it's because “They hated Christians.” Maybe it was because people were unkind.

Was there demonic influence? Was there mental illness we can point to? At our lowest and worst, we use moments like this to justify political positions. We look for something to add up and more often than not, it simply doesn't. Making the jump from our feelings of rejection and victimization, as powerful as they are, to murder is a wide gap no matter what we tell ourselves.

Was this a spiritual issue? Yes. However, probably not in the way you think.

Hate is a spiritual issue. It doesn't matter if it is religion versus religion, political group versus political group, bully versus victim, Christian versus the other. Hate is a spiritual issue. You have to have some deep malice in your heart to perpetrate a crime like what has happened in Colorado. It is impossible to make enough laws or implement enough protective measures to keep hate out of the human heart.

It may sound as if I am throwing up my hands in despair. But I am far from that. I am arguing that as Christians, we need to deal with the real issue, the spiritual issue.

Romans 12 offers an excellent roadmap.

Paul calls us to be living sacrifices. This means we live our lives, not demanding our interests, but sacrificing ourselves for what Christ wants to accomplish. This means we do not conform to the world, and we do not descend into division and hatred. As we do this, we practice verses 9-21:

Let love be without hypocrisy. Hate what is evil. Cleave to what is good. Be devoted to one another with brotherly love; prefer one another in honor, do not be lazy in diligence, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord, rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer, contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless, and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Do not pretend to be wiser than you are.

Repay no one evil for evil. Commend what is honest in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to God's wrath, for it is written: "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay,"

Therefore

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him a drink;

for in doing so you will heap coals of fire on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This is not an easy path, especially in the context of increasing persecution of Christians. If we look like the world, where is the city set on the hill? If we have hatred toward anyone, how can we be the salt of the earth?

Paul, living in a time of great spiritual evil and incredible persecution, offered these words to the church as a way forward. Since hate is a spiritual issue, we would do well to address the real problem and overcome evil with good. It worked for Jesus; we might want to consider doing it as well.

Bob Fabey speaks, writes and mentors helping people to embrace their God-given dignity and give it to others in extravagant ways. An ordained minister based in Arizona, he is the host of 3rd Space Podcast and has just released the book *NotMyJesus*, a humorous yet poignant look at faith, culture and life.