

What Is the Lesson From Newtown School Massacre?

Murdering a human being is an assault on God. He made us in His own image. Destroying an image usually means you hate the imaged. Murdering God's human image-bearer is not just murder. It's treason—treason against the creator of the world. It is a capital crime—and more. “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, *for God made man in His own image*” (Gen. 9:6, ESV).

As usual, Jesus takes this up in devastating terms. None of us escapes.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire” (Matt. 5:21-22).

He does not say unwarranted anger is the *same* as murder. It's not. Ask the bereaved parents of Newtown, Conn. He says both are liable to hell. Both come under a similar sentence from God. Why would Jesus say that?

Because both are a sin against God, not just man. Jesus's threat of hell is owing not to the seriousness of murder against man, but to the seriousness of treason against God. In the mind of Jesus—the mind of God—heartfelt verbal invective against God's image is an assault on the infinite dignity of God, the infinite worth of God. It is, therefore, in Jesus' mind, worthy of God's righteous judgment.

So what we saw in the Newtown murders was a picture of the seriousness of our own corruption. None of us escapes the charge of sinful anger and verbal venom. So we are all under

the just sentence of God's penalty. That is what Jesus was saying in Matthew 5:21-22.

And it is exactly what Jesus said again when people pressed him to talk about the time Pilate slaughtered worshippers in the temple. Instead of focusing on the slain or the slayer, he focused on all of us:

"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:2-3).

Which means that the murders of Newtown are a warning to me—and you. Not a warning to see our schools as defenseless, but to see our souls as depraved. To see our need for a Savior. To humble ourselves in repentance for the God-diminishing bitterness of our hearts. To turn to Christ in desperate need, and to treasure His forgiveness, His transforming and His friendship.

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