

What Jesus Would Tell Americans About the String of Terrorist Attacks

ABC News is reporting that as many as five people were taken into FBI custody last night in connection with Saturday's bombing in Manhattan. In addition, multiple bombs were discovered overnight at a New Jersey train station. A pipe bomb exploded along a racecourse in New Jersey, though no one was injured. And ISIS has claimed responsibility for a stabbing at a Minnesota mall that injured eight.

Life in the age of terrorism seems more fragile than ever.

Our fears are not necessarily based on facts. According to security experts, 94 Americans have been killed by jihadists since 9/11, more than half of them in the Orlando nightclub shooting. An additional 48 have been killed by other extremists such as the Charleston church shooter. As tragic as these deaths are, more Americans die in car accidents every two days.

However, the fear of terrorism can be debilitating. Experts say that living with such fear can trigger obsessive thinking and alter our mood, temperament, motivation and personality.

The best way to respond to the fear of terrorism is to acknowledge our mortality and then to live for what matters most. Watching last night's Emmys, my wife remarked after the "In Memoriam" tribute that many of the deceased actors were our contemporaries. As we grow older, death becomes more real.

And living on purpose becomes more urgent. Julia Louis-Dreyfus won an Emmy last night for her work in *Veep*. In her acceptance speech, she revealed that her father had died two days

earlier. She said, "I'm so glad he liked *Veep* because his opinion was the one that really mattered."

Whose opinion matters most in life?

Jesus testified, "I always do the things that are pleasing to [God]" (John 8:29). Paul exhorted us to do the same: "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (Col. 3:23). "Whatever"—no exceptions or qualifications. There is no "sacred"/"secular" division in the Bible. God sees every moment of every day as under His sovereignty. Every dimension of every life is accountable to Him.

And living every day for His glory and reward is the most fulfilling, purposeful, uplifting way to live. If you are ready to meet Jesus, you are ready to meet whatever life brings.

So ask the Holy Spirit to show you anything in your life that displeases God, then confess all that comes to your thoughts and claim your Father's forgiving grace (1 John 1:9). Now invite the Spirit to take control of your mind and actions (Eph. 5:18) and pray through your plans for the day, surrendering them to your Lord (Rom. 12:1–2).

As you go through your day, pray about your opportunities and challenges as they come (1 Thess. 5:18). Stay close to Jesus, knowing that you are in His hand and nothing can come to you without going through Him (John 10:29). Rejoice that you are more than a conqueror through the one who loves you (Rom. 8:37). And your triumphant faith will be a powerful testimony to a culture living in fear.

The second-century Christian apologist Justin Martyr could say to those who threatened him and his fellow believers, "You can kill us, but you cannot hurt us." Can you say the same?