

June 2022 Pastors Perspective “Looking for Solutions” South Stevens County Times By Pastor Tim White

The media headline said that nineteen children and two adult teachers were gone in a matter of minutes. As I write this, barely two days have passed since the horrifying mass murder at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. Some of the latest details are very disturbing, and yet it is far too soon to make final judgments about what and why things happened as they did.

Unfortunately, however, even before some of the most basic details had come out, a vast array of shameless pundits and politicians, without pause, did all they could to capitalize on the suffering of these families and communities to promote their agenda or cause. Shame on them.

One congressman wanted to stand up in session and shout, “Just do something!” Those three words express the anxiety we all feel as a nation when we see these things happen – and we want to shout out, “Will somebody do something that will stop the carnage?” But what can we actually do that will make a difference?

In times like these, there is a persistent and predictable response of partisans who only care about their larger agenda when the real problem has always been the human heart condition. Unfortunately, too many politicians and activists do not realize that a law that will not change the human heart can do no more good than establishing “gun free zones” has stopped mentally disturbed people from carrying out these evil deeds on school grounds.

What is happening in America? A generation ago, students would bring their rifles to school (leaving them in their vehicle) because they had been hunting that morning or heading out after school. Some even showed their friends their guns in the parking lot during a lunch break. And yet, during that time with “lax gun laws,” school shootings were practically unheard of until April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School.

Statistically, the dramatic increase of violence and crime in our public schools can be traced to the mid-sixties when the Supreme Court took prayer and bible reading out of our schools. Numbers and facts are stubborn, and we would do well to note them. I would encourage the reader to do their own research on this issue.

Most notable is the prayer that was ruled “unconstitutional” in the 1962 case *Engel v. Vitale*, which went like this: “*Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country. Amen.*” This prayer was deemed a violation of “the establishment clause.” So, beginning in 1962, America began her journey away from dependence upon God and to cease asking for His blessings upon our children, parents, teachers, and country. Would it be so wrong to begin to pray like this again? What harm would it cause, and what potential help might it gain?

With each passing decade, we have gradually stepped a little farther away from the One our founding fathers called the “Creator,” who has endowed us with “certain unalienable rights.” Our nation’s founders acknowledged that our rights come from God, not the government. Therefore, our dependence must be on Him alone (just as our national motto states: “In God We Trust”).

As our government has become increasingly bloated and overreaching, our society has become less desirous to believe in God. As a result, once the bedrock of this nation, biblical values are replaced with humanistic and even hedonistic values. Unfortunately, the consequences are playing out before us almost daily. Without the founding biblical principles upon which this nation was built, we become like a ship without a compass – and as the saying goes, “How’s that working for you?”

Alexis de Tocqueville, the 19th Century French political scientist and historian (best known for Democracy in America), came to America to search for the “secret” to America’s “genius and power.” After he looked in the different sectors of American society and culture, without finding the “secret” he was looking for, he said the following:

“Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

When we look at the rising crime rates and growing vices in society, is there any doubt that America is less “good” than she was in past generations (not that they were perfect, either)? However, as a preacher, what truly gets my attention is that according to Tocqueville, the key catalysts that encouraged America to be “good” were the pulpits.

I stand behind one quite often – how have I stewarded that sacred calling?

In 1962 we told our children to stop asking God to bless our schools, families, and country. What have we reaped from that Supreme Court decision? Furthermore, what kind of message have we preachers trumpeted from our pulpits over the last sixty years? The answer will be different for all of us. Could it be time for a fresh wind to fill our pulpits that compassionately confront sin and challenge the hearers to selfless service for Christ and His Kingdom?

The hope for this nation will not be found in the halls of government but in the House of God. Alexis de Tocqueville also said: “Liberty cannot be established without morality, nor morality without faith.” The Good News of Christ is that He forgives our sins, sets us free, and changes our hearts (Ezekial 36:26 says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” If we give ourselves to God and His Church, then only He knows how many hurting hearts will be transformed and children’s lives saved from tragedies as we have witnessed in Texas.

Dear Church, it is time we “Wake up, and strengthen what remains...” (Rev. 3:2a)