Glad Tidings

Violence

(Jerry Fite)

Twenty children, and six teachers are shot to death in an elementary school in Newton, Connecticut. The twenty-year- old killer had earlier shot his mother four times in the head, killing her while she was still in her pajamas. A seventeen - year- old student opens fire upon fellow students at Santa Fe High School, killing eight fellow students and two teachers.   An eighty-three- year- old man, picking up cans, is beaten to death in Pasadena, Texas by a twenty-year-old man. Over the last six years, children, teenagers, middle-age, and elderly people have all been victims of deadly violence at school, in the home and on the street.

Violence is not a new phenomenon. We are short-sighted to think that the last decade is the only time- period with escalating violence. It began with the first family on earth. Cain killed his younger brother, Abel, while they were together in the field (Genesis 4:8). Later, violence filled the world. Moses speaks of the state of the world before the flood: *"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. (Genesis 6:11-12).*   The world was in decay because man had corrupted their way on earth. Such was the result of man's thinking. The Lord *"saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).*   When man frames his thoughts with evil, he will live wickedly. Violence will ensue.

Untethered from God's will in the mind, the wicked become a law to themselves. They feel free to harm the person whose actions displease them. Cain could have sought the godly path of making sure his sacrifice pleased God, like he knew Abel's did. Instead, his thoughts followed the path of "the evil one" and rose up to murder his own righteous brother (I John 3:12).

If one does not believe in God, man's life has little value. God's Word, revealing that man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27, 9:6), has little impact in deterring one from murder. Filling the mind with violent video games, the unstable can escalate the violence to real life. Being bullied by a few, a vindictive mind can shower malevolent violence upon the many. Why not use your superior strength to kick the life out of an old man, before running your hands through the dead man's pockets for some loose change?

When men do what is right in their own eyes, violent deeds often occur. This was true in the time of the Judges *"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which is right in his own eyes" (2 Samuel 21:25).* A Levite's concubine was sexually abused and left to die in the region of the tribe of Benjamin *(Judges 19:25).*   The priest took vengeance into his own hands by cutting her body up in twelve pieces and sending the severed body parts throughout the borders of Israel *(Judges 19:29).* This unheard-of-before -action led to war which reduced Benjamin to 600 men *(Judges 19:30, 20:47).* God allowed the breach in Israel and will allow violent deeds to trouble societies today. Violence often occurs when hearts are framed by evil intent, instead of the will of God!

Our society, which largely disregards God, should not be surprised when violence escalates. It goes with the territory of man turning away from God.