

## Pastoral Thoughts on the Death of Charlie Kirk

Now, some of you may be wondering why I am choosing to speak on this issue. That is a good question. If you've been here long enough, you know I try to preach straight from the text and allow the Holy Spirit to move; I try not to speak so freely on political applications, though applications certainly come as we apply the Bible. And, I think today, you will find even this message to be thoroughly biblical (my hope anyway). So why this message? A few reasons: 1) Since his death, so many of YOU have called me and spoken to me in person about how we are to think of what happened. 2) Even non-Christian friends and family members from other parts of the world are asking us questions about what happened. 3) Our media, both Christian and non-Christian are speaking volumes on his death. 4) Even our own denomination and SBC president have put out a statement asking for folks to sign a declaration. Let me read that quickly.

I am not sure in God's sovereignty why this happened. But, for these reasons I want to help us think through and process the shooting of Charlie Kirk (and other events like this in our culture), I would like to give some categories that might help us: 1) Justice, 2) Death, 3) Mercy and Grace, and 4) Truth. I will conclude with some applications.

1. Justice. I think one of the first things that comes to mind is that of justice. As Christians, and as most non-Christians really consider this death, we know there is something wrong with a man climbing onto a roof with high powered rifle, taking aim from 200 yards, and delivering the bullet that took Charlie's life. I think we can say he was killed in innocent blood. He was preparing to engage young people in debate on a college campus in Utah, something he has done in a peaceful manner for many years now. And suddenly, his life was taken from him. This is NOT RIGHT. This is NOT JUST. This man should not have done what he did! Charlie Kirk should be with his wife and kids. And as far as possible, we desire for justice to be served in the capture and punishment of the young man who committed the murder.

2. Death. There is nothing pretty or praiseworthy about death, no matter when it comes. Whether as an old man dying in his armchair, a soldier on the battlefield, a child in a car accident, an baby in the womb, a young girl stabbed on a train, or a husband and father shot in cold blood. Death, in and of itself, is not glorious! We HATE death! Non-Christians FEAR death. No matter what we do to dress up the corpse, death is a brutal reality we all must face. And the reason is SIN! In God's sovereign decree to order this world, death is God's punishment. We did not come up with this. Death is not merely part of some "evolutionary" process. The Bible says, "**The wages of sin is DEATH**" (Rom. 6:23). "**Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned . . .**" (Rom. 5:12). The fact that death is SO unglorious, SO undignified, SO nasty in all its forms, SO seriously contrary to the God of life, is because it is the reality and consequence of falling short of God's glory. It must be so! There is nothing to celebrate about death as God's punishment for sin. Shame on those who, for political or other reasons, celebrate Charlie's death. (or anyone's for that matter)

3. Mercy and Grace. A moment ago, I only read part of Rom. 6:23; the second half of the verse says, **“but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** In these words we find mercy and grace. Let’s start with mercy. Way back in the Garden of Eden God told Adam and Eve that if they were to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they will surely die. This includes physical death, separation from God and his presence, and eternal punishment. But, what did God do? He made a PROMISE that one day He would send a savior, one who would restore life, both spiritual and physical, and give eternal life through his Messiah . . . And make ALL THINGS in this world right again! THIS is MERCY! God did not have to do this! OUR SINS DESERVE DEATH, from the most moral person who ever lived to the most evil person who ever lived, there is no difference. To fall short of God’s glory is to fall short. And every one of us deserves just punishment for our sins. This is HARD, I know! But it is nonetheless true! And if any of us find peace with God, it will be because of his mercy!

And following close behind this mercy, is what we call grace. Grace is God’ mercy played out in his promise to send a deliverer, a Messiah, the Lord Jesus, the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON. And those who believe in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). This is the good news of the gospel! **“For by grace you have been saved through faith”** (Eph. 2:8). Jesus Christ lived a sinless life (He never fell short of God’s glory). He laid down his life on a wooden cross and shed his blood. He laid down his life as the ONLY perfect sacrifice. And God raised him to life after three days. And now He sits at the right hand of God as the exalted King. And those who believe in HIM find the great mercy and grace of God! Such is the case for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, the reason we speak of Charlie Kirk’s death is because he was a Christian brother. Now, I don’t where he went to church or exactly what he believed on various doctrines. But, it seems to me that He was truly a brother in Christ. And though his early career may not have been as clear on where he stood, after listening to his words and reading about him, I am convinced he made a credible profession. This means that Charlie was a recipient of the mercy and grace of God. And we can believe that **“precious in the sight of the Lord are the death of his saints”** (Ps. 116:15). Though justice demanded his death, even his “untimely” death, the justice of God was displayed in his faith in the gospel of Christ.

4. Truth. For some reason, Charlie was in the lime-light. He was a polarizing figure in our culture. And his death has caused such a response from both conservatives and liberals politically, and from Christians and non-Christians. We do not know all his motives. But, as he debated in the public square, he stood for what Christians generally regard as truth. He spoke of truths about God and this world, trying to convince people of these truths, of God’s creation, of God’s creation order (male and female, marriage between a man and a woman, healthy family relationships. He spoke of morality concerning many of the wrongs committed in our world such as abortion and euthanasia, pornography, etc.) Now, he wasn’t perfect! I am sure he has lost his temper, hated his neighbor in his heart, wasn’t always patient with his wife and kids or with the people he debated. (Which of us are perfect?) But, at the end of the day, he stood for truth. And

in this way, I think he has been a good example for Christians and for morality in general. Brothers and sisters, truth is always on our side. And, the evil world we live in does not always like or accept the truth.

With this in mind, I want to give some applications for us as we consider and digest Charlie's death and how we engage our culture.

1. **"All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"** (2 Tim. 3:12). Many are persecuted; many are killed all the time in the world for their beliefs, whether good or bad. But, as Christians who live in this world as salt and light, and as those who preach about the Son of God dying on a cross, over time, we will be persecuted. We don't look for it. We don't necessarily want it. But, Jesus says, ***"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you"*** (John 15:20). If you are NEVER receiving some kind of pushback, some kind of disagreement, some kind of reaction to your words when you preach the gospel and when you try to apply the gospel in an evil world, then you should consider if you are being faithful in your witness. I think God can and will use Charlie's death spur us on to more boldness.

2. **We must engage the public square with the truth.** This certainly begins with the Gospel of Jesus. But, it must also include ALL the truths of Scripture. Brothers and sisters, we have the "WORDS OF LIFE." And we can apply the words of life to give answers in this world. I think we can safely say this is what Charlie did. He engaged people with the gospel and with the truths of the Bible. WE MUST USE WORDS. We cannot be silent. And God will give everyone different venues to engage the world. But, I must say that in my conversations with some folks, and with others on social media, there is a desire to carry out justice by almost "picking up the sword." I think there is some kind of righteous anger to get the sword, and like the Apostle Peter, slash at someone (Garden of Gethsemane). But, Jesus did not commend him in this act. Instead, he healed the man's ear. Our unrighteous anger will not bring about the kingdom of God. OT Israel is not our primary example. We are not a theocracy in our culture. I am not proposing some kind of "physical" crusade as we've seen in the history of Europe. Scripture will not allow me to do so in good conscience.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is our example. When we are persecuted, after the ear is cut off when the unrighteous arrest us, we pray for the their ear to be healed. Many years later, Peter tells believers to remember the example of Christ when they are persecuted. In 1 Pet. 2:22-23: he says **"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."** The Apostles are our examples. Paul is our example (not OT Paul who persecuted and killed the early believers, but Christian Paul).

So, what does this look like? We must use words. We must be more active, particularly in our speech as we engage our neighbors, our co-workers, this secular world in the market place, etc. Though I/we do not know all of Charlie's beliefs, and we would never question his motive, and

as I've noted, I think we must assume that he was a brother in Christ who cared about the gospel. So, we must stand with him and those like him. I am not saying all of us should set up social media platforms or travel the country preaching and debating on college campuses (though some of us may), but we must stand with folks like him in these days. Brothers and sisters, we must be more active in sharing our faith AND engaging the world in natural law truth debates and explanations of the Bible. We can also use our freedoms politically as we use our voices, as we vote, as we write in editorials and engage the world.

At the end of the day, we are concerned with truth! And we are concerned with how truth affects our culture and our governments. What kind of good citizen would we be if we were not concerned. And no matter where we stand on eschatology and end times, we all agree in the principle laid down in Ps. 2:10-12 which says, **"Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."**

3. There is such a thing as righteous anger. I think this is what I have been hearing from many of you. And this feeling, this disposition, stems from our understanding of justice, as well as our thoughts of compassion for his family, his mother father, wife, kids, etc. It is ok to be angry and not sin as we consider events like this. But, at the same, we must appeal to Scripture, particularly Jesus and his fulfillment of the New Covenant, as we go down deep into our own hearts and question our own motives.

4. Remember the mercy and grace of God. If it were not for the mercy and grace of God, where would you be? You may be on a roof with a rifle. You may be as Paul, dragging Christians to their death in the name of God. You may be walking the streets of Charlotte under the heavy influence of some substance. You may be an angry husband who beats your wife and kids. You may be the abortion doctor with the guilt of murder on your hands. Wait a minute, maybe you were some of those things. I am reminded of the words of Paul to the Corinthians: **"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God"** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). If you get into heaven one day, it will not be because of your "good" moral choices or your stances on politics; it will be because the blood of Jesus covers your sins . . . which stems from the great mercy and grace of God.

5. The Church is the pillar and buttress of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Only through the preaching of the gospel do we see hearts changed. This is what we do in the church. At the same time the government must punish wrongdoers and uphold justice. And when the government upholds justice, there is an environment where the gospel of Christ can be preached. As Christians we

have been given the Sword of the Spirit, etc. This “sword” has not been given to the government. The government is given the physical sword to carry out justice. As we are reminded from God’s covenant with Noah: “***Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image***” (Gen. 9:6). Today, the church is the greatest organization of good in the world! Jesus does not build “political” alliances; He is building the CHURCH. Jesus says: “**And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it**” (Matt. 16:18).

With this in mind, what are the weapons of our warfare in this evil world? Let me read Eph. 6:10-10 and make some comments in closing.

**“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”**

May God Bless us in these ways!