



By Dr. Richard Youngblood

Question: How would Jesus suggest that we need to feel and react toward violent shootings like the one that happened in Arizona? (Part 1 of 2)

The violent shooting that occurred in Tucson, Arizona, this past week is but one of many similar events that have occurred over the past several years. Numerous questions are raised each time this happens. How could someone in our nation do such an evil thing? Why did this happen? What could have been done to prevent it? Obviously, not everyone can or should go to Arizona and get personally involved in helping the victims or the officials working on this case. However, I do believe we can benefit from reflection on our own thoughts and feelings about such evil acts.

For example, many people hear of these acts of violence and become fear-driven. They may refuse to go out to public events or places unless absolutely necessary. They may seek security behind locked doors and barred windows with an electronic security system attached. Some people purchase guns and other weapons so that they can defend themselves.

However, Jesus would want us to know that overwhelming fear is inappropriate to people who claim to live by faith in God. Ever since sin entered our world, there have been many very real dangers all around us. There are drunks on the roads, gangs in the neighborhoods of our cities and other people who will do almost anything to obtain illegal drugs that provide them an escape into irrational oblivion. Today, airplanes and automobiles crash, and international terrorists plant bombs while seeking to destroy our country. Obviously, we will never totally escape all danger even with all of the security measures that are available in today's world. But by faith in the God who determines the ultimate outcome of all things, we can overcome our fears and live joyful and confident lives every day. Jesus would remind us of the words of the shepherd psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd . . . Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4; cf. Psalm 27 & 46). We do not have to become fear-driven.

In contrast to a response of fear, some people react with great apathy toward news of these violent acts. Having viewed so many acts of violence on TV and in the movies, they apparently see such incidents as just

another usual occurrence in our world. They may also think that it happened so far away and, besides, they don't know anyone involved personally. They may also feel there is nothing which they can do about the situation now. When we add the fact that our culture teaches us to avoid pain and suffering at all costs, we see why some people seek a fantasy world instead of facing reality.

But apathy is an inappropriate response for believers in the Jesus who had "compassion" upon the sick, the blind, the hungry and the lost. His followers are called upon to "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12). The word "compassion" refers to the ability to feel sympathy or pity with those who are facing pain and sorrow. One who loses the ability to be touched with compassion for the suffering of others may soon find himself also without the ability to feel joy or happiness. We simply lose the ability to feel any emotion. If the Spirit of Christ lives in us, we will never be indifferent to any act of violence or evil, even if it does occur many miles from where we live. Christians are called upon to "Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15).

(More responses in next week's article.)

[Send questions or comments or request for a copy to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071, phone 270-753-1881 or email richardy@murray-ky.net] 2011/01/14