

## *Pk's Perspectives ...Silent Not Defeated*

I've scratched out the opening sentence of this blog a thousand times. Maybe two thousand times. For a guy who makes a living with words, I can't seem to find them now. I don't know what to say.

Just after 10 o'clock Central Standard Time on Monday, March 27, an armed intruder blew open the locked doors of a local Christian elementary school and entered the halls of the school. Thirteen minutes later, three nine-year-old third-grade students and three adults who worked at the school, along with the shooter, were dead. For days now, I've walked around trying to think of something to say, but I haven't thought of anything yet.

Nashville is still a small town. I know most of the pastors who serve in this community and who were involved in this event. I'm two or three degrees of separation from most of the victims. Everyone is. Almost on the minute, I get another text from a friend that begins, "You won't believe this..." I don't believe them. I don't believe any of this. I can't. The circles of sadness keep swirling around me.

I'm a father. I'm a grandfather. How do you tug your child's backpack tight around their shoulders, fuss at them for being late to get ready for school, kiss them on their forehead, and then, never see them again? I don't know what to say. How do you show up for work at a school — a nice, upscale, Christian, private school — and then, upon hearing gunshots, know that you now have to launch the active shooter protocol? You run toward the gunshots. You have to protect the children. I don't know what to say.

The police are called. Ambulances rush to the scene. Desperate parents run to the school and are redirected to a neighboring church where authorities take hours to reunite parents and children. Phones ring with calls and texts. People beg for prayers. And people did pray. We prayed for safety, protection, healing, and strength — and we asked, "Why?" I didn't get an answer to that last prayer. No one I know did. Perhaps that's the hardest part of all. We can't figure out why. For some reason, we think that if we understood why all this happened it would make it easier to deal with. It won't. Even if we knew why, it still wouldn't make any sense.

Of course, the politicians and activists have all added their voices to the sadness. They're blaming it on the lack of gun control, on those who struggle with identity issues, each of them using the community's pain to score their points. I wish they would all shut up. Sometimes silence is the best answer. Sometimes silence is the only answer. When there is nothing to say, the best thing to do is to not say anything. There are times when only tears will do. When prayers can't be spoken, but only sighed.

See, we forget that the world is still a very dangerous place. For all of our successes and strides as human beings, the chaos of the world still breaks through in ways that don't make sense. Our world is still very broken. If you ever tour an old graveyard, one of the things that might surprise you is the number of children who are buried next to their parents. We've come a long way in protecting our children. We protect them from disease and unclean water, but we can't protect them from everything.

We build beautiful churches. We try to make them places where people can worship and be safe, but we can't prevent everything. Evil comes in unbidden. In the face of such evil, there's nothing to say. No words make it better.

When Jesus died on the cross, the sun went black and God the Father was silent. Yet, we misread His silence. He wasn't defeated. He was waiting, waiting until the moment when He would raise Jesus from the dead and begin His redemptive work that will only be completed when Jesus returns. Last Monday morning, the sun was shining, but it was dark just the same. God was silent, but He wasn't defeated. He is only waiting. And until He's finished, we wait in silence with Him.

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