

Where Was God?

Written by Bill Perkins

I can't remember watching a news story that triggered more horrible images. Children gunned down by an angry twenty year old man. Horrible words seem like gravel in my mouth when I speak them.

Children.

Gunned down.

A Few Hours Earlier

A few hours earlier these children had been dropped off at school by a parent. Some had taken the bus, walked, or ridden their bike. These kids were enjoying their favorite time of year. They wanted out of school so they could run home and look under the Christmas tree.

What horrible agony the parents must endure as they imagine that last moment. Their child's face showing confusion and then fear. And then hoping it happened so fast there would be no time for fear. But realizing for some of the kids, the ones killed later, there was time for fear.

Such horrifying thoughts would torment me. And there would be no end to them. One question and imagination would follow another. Sleep would be a distant mirage.

No Parent Would Have Sent Them

No parent would send their child to school that day if they had known the outcome.

God Did That

As I considered that thought, something occurred to me. God did that. He sent his son into the very school and classroom where he knew he would be lied about, bullied, ganged up on by school and government officials, made fun of, charged and illegally convicted of a crime he didn't commit, beaten in the face and head with a stick, beaten with leather straps embedded with bone and iron, spat upon, nailed to a piece of wood, left to die in front of a crowd of jeering locals. Knowing all of that, God sent his son to school that December day.

The danger Jesus faced surfaced shortly after his birth. One night an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to flee to Egypt because Herod was going to search for the child to kill him. Joseph immediately climbed out of bed, grabbed Mary and Jesus and took off for Egypt.

Every Younger Brother, Killed

When Herod discovered he had been out-witted, he flew into a rage. The king ordered the killing of every male child, two years of age and younger, that lived in Bethlehem and its vicinity.

What horror the mothers must have felt when the armed men, dressed in military garb, took their sons and killed them while they stood by helplessly watching. Every younger brother, killed. Every childhood friend, killed. They were all killed, most likely, in a single day.

The anger, confusion and grief we now feel, those mothers and fathers felt. Their children had been murdered by a madman. They had watched it happen. An entire town and surrounding area had suffered the loss of every boy two years of age and younger.

A Father Who Watched

This reality helps me understand how God can sympathize with our grief and sorrow. Not as a close family friend who has never lost a child but offers sincere sympathy. Rather, God understands as a Father who watched madmen torture and kill his only son.

That may be why Paul wrote, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

A Warm Blanket

God is not the source of evil. He did not cause the events that happened last week. Instead, he comes alongside the brokenhearted and wraps a warm blanket around them. The same blanket he wrapped around himself at his Son's death. One day in the future, those comforted by God's presence, will meet someone who has suffered a similar loss. When that happens, they will wrap them in the same warm blanket.

God doesn't offer trite answers to tough questions. Instead he offers himself. He offers a gift ... his only Son. See him in the manger? An infant. Helpless. Harmless. Yet one day, this child will become a man and suffer a violent death.

This Christmas as you draw near to the Infant ... reflect on the world he entered. And reflect on the God of compassion who sent him as a gift to be rejected.