



First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte

FOR CHRIST IN THE HEART OF CHARLOTTE



A Faithful Response to Gun Violence

**A joint Sunday School class
hosted by the Advocacy
Committee**

October 15 - 29, 2023



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What's in Store

October 15: Intro and framing

October 22: Actual Impact

October 29: Naming the Emotion

**October 29: Panel
Discussion/Lunch
(12:15)**

Call to Action



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Assumptions

- No one is comfortable or accepting of how much we are affected by gun violence.
- The way we talk/debate the issue is broken and not helpful.
- Solutions are hard to come by because emotions are high and they are tied into money and politics.
- It is helpful to think about this issue theologically, not politically. (These thoughts are not a public policy solve, but ideas for how to shape the thinking of followers of Jesus).
- Gun violence is a matter of faith because we can be sure that it breaks God's heart.



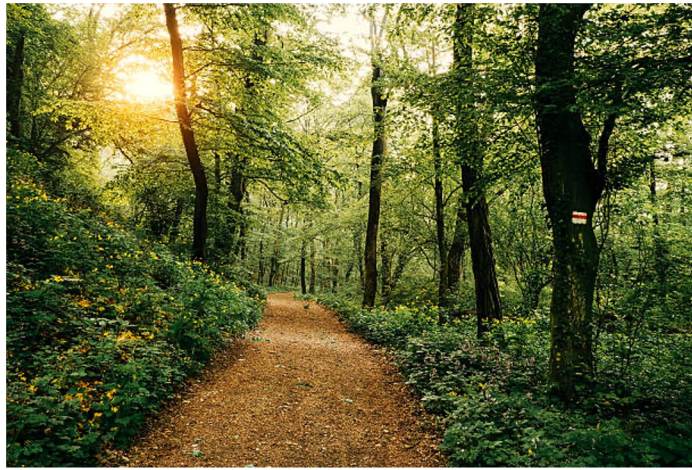


Creation

Genesis 1:27

Jeremiah 29:11

Psalms 139:13



Christian Life

Exodus 20:13

Matthew 5:9

Matthew 19:19

2 Cor 5:16-18



Promise

Isaiah 2:4

Isaiah 11:9

Revelation 21:4



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Sin = Creation disordered

- Any distortion in God's good and intended order is evidence of sin.
- Rather than labeling the perpetrators of sin as "bad" or "evil" - it is more constructive to understand what motivates the sin. Said differently, it is easy to just think about sin on an individual basis. What is harder - and more effective - is to consider the systemic nature of sin.
- H.R. Niebuhr: Created→Finitude→Anxious
- On a societal level, what makes us anxious enough to want guns? To use guns?



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Frame #1: Understanding Culture

Assumptions about culture (in particular, American culture):

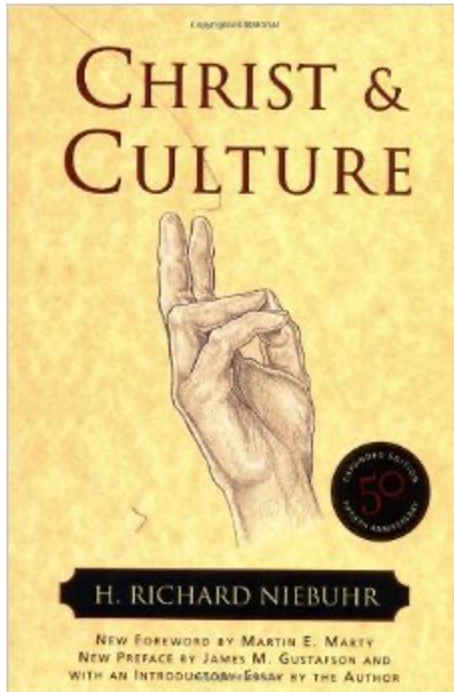
- It shapes us in powerful ways
- The ways our culture shapes us are not value-neutral (some good, some not-so-good)
- This is true of every culture in every place in every time
- The superabundance of gun violence in our country compared to almost every other nation on earth is a reflection of our culture in some way (individualism, origins, governance...)



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Frame #1: Understanding Culture



- The challenge for a follower of Jesus is to discern the difference between the culture that shapes us and the kind of life that Christ calls us to lead.
- No culture is a hand-in-glove-fit to Christ's way of life.
- This means as followers of Christ we should pay attention to where we feel defensive around the ways our faith might challenge popular cultural assumptions.
- HR Niebuhr: (1) Christ against culture, (2) Christ of culture, (3) Christ above culture, (4) Christ and culture in paradox, (5) Christ the transformer of culture



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Frame #2: Idolatry

- Idolatry:
 - Luther: The one thing for which our hearts yearn
 - Tillich: Our “Ultimate Concern”
 - Augustine: Our primary loves
- It’s the first commandment for a reason
- We make an idol out of lots of things (nobody’s picking on your idol)
- Passion belies idolatry





Frame #2: Idolatry

- To knock an idol down a peg doesn't mean it ceases to exist - it just has less power
- Guns as an American Idol
- What's behind it? What other idols do we have that guns represent?





Frame #3: Hope



- Resurrection doesn't allow us to be hopeless
- Look for shoots among stumps
- We have to fight against different kinds of hopelessness
 - That gun violence is doomed to happen
 - That legislative change is impossible
 - That we should arm ourselves as the best option

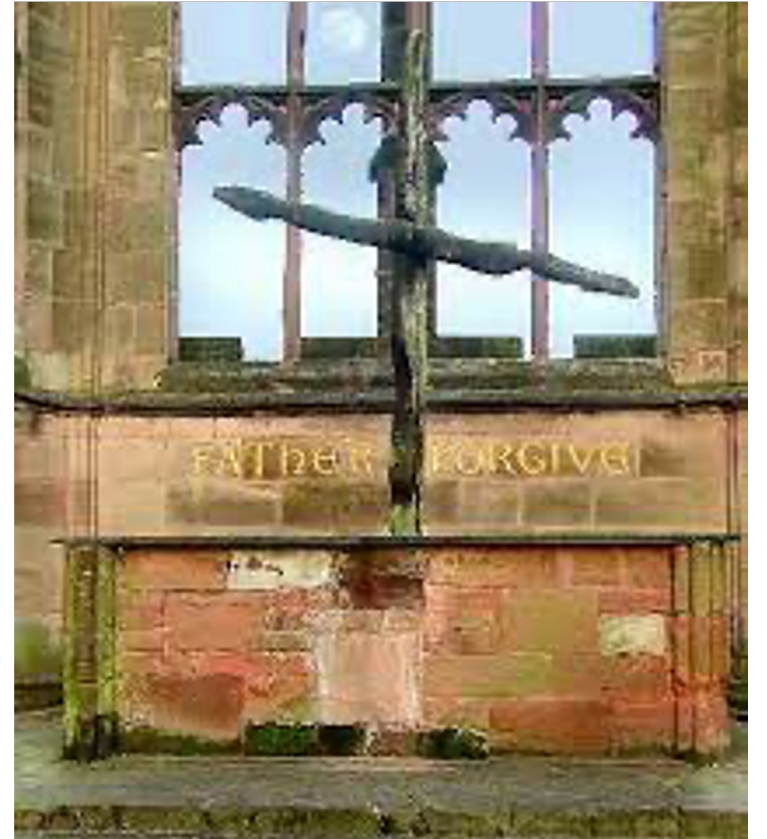


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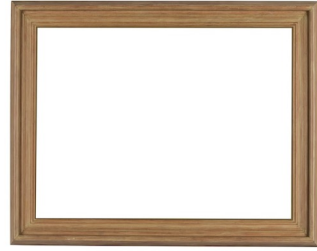


Frame #4: Suffering

- There is **one** place where God is involved in gun violence: Present in the midst of suffering.
- God stands on the side of those who suffer.
- This sets the priorities for those of us who follow Jesus: If we have to make a choice between suffering and rights, we choose to stand with the suffering.



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Frame #5: Action



- *Acts 1:8: ...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'*
- Part of being a witness to Christ is articulating what our faith leads us not only to think, but to do.
- We do better using theological convictions than arguing policy.



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Questions/Comments/Thoughts



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