



Cry, the Beloved Cities

The Resurgent, by Tom Searl,

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“Have no doubt it is fear in the land. For what can men do when so many have grown lawless?” - Alan Paton in *Cry, The Beloved Country*

Another weekend in 2020 has passed, a holiday weekend no less. This past Saturday, we celebrated our country’s founding. We grilled out, set off fireworks, went swimming, and generally enjoyed ourselves. But not everyone. This past weekend several families in inner cities around the country found themselves grieving the loss of a child because of uncontrolled violence.

Early Monday Morning, Megyn Kelly posted to Twitter the pictures of five children who had been killed in gun violence over the weekend. These children were all African American. She wrote, “Look at these sweet faces. What a heartbreak. How is this not priority #1 for BLM? Tough to take them seriously when this gets a shoulder shrug, time and time again.”

Predictably, the responses to her Tweet were largely negative. Some accused her of whitesplaining what Black Lives Matter should care about in order to make it more acceptable to white people. Others used the opportunity to lecture about gun control. Still others said she was engaging in fake concern trolling or trying to hide her quiet racism.

To be fair, there were responses that were supportive of her Tweet as well. However, even these took on a somewhat negative tone. Many of these pointed out that Black Lives Matter only cares when white people are involved. Some pointed out that there was silence in these cases because they didn’t fit the narrative of the media. Others went far enough to say that Black Live Matter only cares about advancing communist ideology.

All of these responses had one thing in common, they pushed a political agenda. All of these responses used a series of horrific tragedies to lash out, make a point, and dunk on the opposition. And all of them demonstrated one truth that pervades the human drama.

What is the truth that they missed? They missed the underlying human condition from which these tragedies resulted.

Now, I'm a preacher, so please indulge me. It seems to me that every religion on Earth is designed to answer two questions. These questions are what's wrong with us and how do we fix it?

As an Evangelical Christian, I am understandably partial to the Evangelical Christian answer to these two questions. According to Christian tradition, humankind was created in the image of God but, because of sin, has since fallen from that original, perfect state. In this new, broken state, humanity has become violent, selfish, hateful, ignorant, greedy, and all sorts of other despicable things.

That is what's wrong with us.

The answer to the question of how we fix it comes in the person of Christ. It is the Christian assertion that Christ was God incarnate and in him we find our salvation. Because of our sin, we owed a debt we could not pay. But Christ, as God, was able to pay this debt he did not owe.

In other words, we were created in God's image, have since fallen from that state, and can find restoration to that state through union with Christ. Once reunited with God, through Christ, the Christian again can engage in works that both glorify God and heal humanity. This three-act drama, the creation and fall and redemption of humanity, has been called the Bible's big picture, or its grand narrative.

So, what does all of this have to do with the tragedies over the weekend? What does all of this have to do with Megyn Kelly's Tweet and its responses? Because both the tragedies of children being murdered and the cynical exploitation of these tragedies by both sides for political advantage are indicative of the fallen state of humanity. And in both cases, the solution is a heavy injection of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:12-13 says, "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." (NIV)

In this passage, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Christian Church in a city called Philippi. His words here clearly demonstrate the difference between Christianity and the rest of the world's religions, both in his time and in the present. For the vast majority of religions, the individual person has to work for, or fulfill a law, or live according to some code in order to achieve some defined end.

Or, to put it another way, for most religions, the implementation of that religion is a lifetime of striving for some sort of prize. For some, its admittance to heaven. For some, it's achieving Nirvana. Still others seek graduation to a higher form of existence.

But, for Christianity, the big moment, the defining experience, comes at the beginning, not the end. For the Christian, the big moment (I'll call it salvation from here on out) is the kickoff to their spiritual journey, not the destination of it. Notice this verse say to "work out your salvation." It doesn't say, "work for your salvation." This is telling us that, for Christians, all good works proceed from this first experience, from this salvation.

The next part of these verses emphasizes this by saying "for it is God who works in you to will and to act." So, for the Christian, not only does salvation begin their lifetime of work, but the desire and ability to do this work is actually supplied by God throughout the entire process.

To cap this all off, the end of all of these works, according to Paul, is to fulfill God's good purpose, not our own.

In all three stages, the beginning and the middle and the end, we see God not only at work, but as being primary in every single aspect.

But in these events over the weekend and in the Twitter aftermath, God has been conspicuously absent. He certainly wasn't involved in the shootings of these children and he certainly is nowhere to be found in the Twitter discussion afterward.

Even in the Tweets that I agreed with on Megyn Kelly's post, the impetus or motivation for the Tweet was self-serving and aimed at scoring political points. It was not aimed at the restoration of Humanity in any way.

In fact, as I look out at the social landscape of our country, I see very little in the way of restoring humanity to God. I see Christians on the right trying to use politics to push their religious agenda. I see Christians on the left trying to use religion to push their political agenda. And all this time God sits, waiting for someone willing to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, so that he can work through them to achieve his ends.

Meanwhile, with all of these demonstrations of humanity's fallenness and no clouds of redemption on the horizon, our children grow up in cities plagued by violence and fear.

"Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply. Let him not laugh too gladly when the water runs through his fingers, nor stand too silent when the setting sun makes red the veld with fire. Let him not be too moved when the birds of his land are singing, nor give too much of his heart to a mountain or a valley. For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much."

-Alan Paton in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Source: <https://theresurgent.com/2020/07/07/cry-the-beloved-cities/>