Why?

On Tuesday, May 24, 2022 Salvador Ramos shot his grandmother, he then proceeded to drive to a local school and kill 19 students and 2 teachers. There is a list of such shootings including Columbine High School in Colorado, Sandy Hook in Connecticut, Parkland in Florida, etc. Numerous people were killed in each and the predominate question is; why did it happen?

Perhaps the most recent shooting shocks people due to the young age of most victims who were eight to 10 years old. In this article we want to address the why question and importantly what can we as individuals do about these acts of violence.

Tragedies can fall into two different categories, those which are due to our imperfect world, and those due to people intending on hurting others. In the "imperfect world" category are illnesses, accidents, acts of nature, and just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. People with terminal illness often ask, why me? There are those who look down at the wrong time, cross the center line on the road and hit another car. Earlier this year numerous people were killed in Kentucky due to tornadoes. Any of these can happen to us, in which case we are limited to what we can do to protect ourselves.

But there are times when a person or more decides to harm others. Columbine High School involved two students who killed as many as they could before their death. A recent shooting in Buffalo involved a young man who wanted to kill black people and in Florida a "gay" night club was targeted, the gunmen were determined to kill as many as possible.

We can say our society is terribly divided and with hatred being spewed by a lot of people. Those who disagree with my group or my opinion are viewed as the enemy and enemies are to be defeated. The isolation caused by COVID has caused an increase in suicides. Young people have not received a normal education during this time. Communication and social encounters have suffered. I can understand young people feeling dejected and depressed when looking at the state of our nation.

To be fair, this is not the first time our nation has experienced such turbulent times. During the Great Depression there was widespread poverty but very few resorted to murder/suicide. In the 1960's there were race riots, and marches due to the Vietnam War but still few schools had to worry about random acts of violence.

What is different now? Our society has sought to remove God from its everyday life. His name is used as a curse word and/or in vain. The Bible is ridiculed as being out of touch and even harmful for its "negative" condemnation of certain actions. People have been told to do whatever they want whenever they want. Situation ethics is no longer theory or exposed by a few but taught in school, in movies, on television, and practiced daily. Add to this the violence we see on a regular basis as entertainment. The Romans had their "circus" in which gladiators killed Christians and others were fed to lions as a sport. Now we have in graphic detail murders and shootings in our video games.

Perhaps more importantly is the "heart problem" many people have. Their thoughts, desires, and emotions have been corrupted. This heart problem has led to a behavioral problem. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Matthew 15:18-19). You can take away the guns and knives but until you change the heart there will be more murders and shootings.

What can we as individuals do to change things around us? The below list was given by our Wednesday night invitation speaker, Jordan Horsley, as he mentioned some little things, we can do which make a difference.

> Be kind to others
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> Say please and thank you
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> Make eye contact with others
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> Empathize with others
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> Get to know one another

The above list is simple and doable. It is also individual in nature. Each one of us can do this for ourselves and it will lift up those around us.

I would like to add a few more thoughts. If we are down cast, becoming angry and ungrateful then we can change our way of thinking. "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things

which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:8-9).

This starts with being more like Jesus. Let Him be our example of enduring while suffering persecution. Be thankful for your blessings. A lot of people wish they lived in this land of plenty. As parents be involved with your children. A common theme in many of these school shootings is parents unaware of what their children were doing. Go out of your way to help others, be a blessing to others. Finally, pray for your enemies. "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you," (Matthew 5:44). – Dennis Tucker