

ready to go to sleep. The night is pitch-black and he remembers the lights of the Amalakite campfires glowing in the hills. He asks his daddy if they want to come and kill us to take what we have. When his dad said yes, he said, "Daddy I'm scared." The dad motions for him to come over; opens the flap of their tent; points to the glow in the middle of the camp and says, "**Son, look who's here.**" (The darker the night, the brighter is the light of God's presence.)

Churches remind us that God is here **to help**. In the shock wave of "911" people flooded into the churches, like they hadn't done in years. It didn't last long, but they came. When we see a church building, **we are reminded that God will be "our refuge and strength" (Psalm 46: 1) if we ask Him.**

Churches! Thank God for the sight of them,
The beauty, dreams and right of them.
That make us think, every time we look,
Of God and right and the Holy Book.

Churches also give us **hope in horrible times**. There is the hope of heaven. Steeples and crosses remind us of the hope of heaven. The Christmas story takes place in a terrible time. It has the bloody scene of baby boys in Bethlehem, being killed with Roman swords. This bothers me, but I find comfort in knowing those little boys and their families were the first people to suffer for Jesus and they are in heaven right now singing His praises. (And we all know where Herod is.)

In World War II, the Germans bombed England day and night. A Lutheran church took a direct hit and all that was left standing was the front of the building. All behind it was rubble. The Pastor stood in front, Bible opened, trying to comfort a small group of people. A man walking by said, "Put the Book up preacher. You preachers talk about hell; hell is right here. Look around you! This is hell." The pastor said, sir, this isn't hell. Here is a *church* and there are no churches in hell; here is a *Bible* and there are no Bibles in hell; and here is someone inviting you to come to Christ, and there is no one, who will do that in hell".

Some find *hopelessness* in hard times. They see things like the horrors of war; crimes against children; cancer wards; people dying of Covid-19; and lose their faith in God. In the 1950's, guards in a prison at the Buford, Georgia rock quarry were so cruel, that a group of prisoners broke their own legs, to get the attention of outsiders. When the prison was investigated, they found written on one cell wall, "***They ain't no God.***"

This was no proud, philosophical fool spouting his atheism. It was one of life's walking wounded, so crushed by life that he was saying, "If there is a God, He doesn't care about me".

People can *see God in us*. In World War I, soldiers slaughtered each other between long trenches. One day a wounded soldier in a trench, grabbed a Chaplain, and said, "Where is God in all this?" About that time, they heard a wounded soldier trying to get back to the trench, crying for help. When a soldier in the trench, went out into the line of fire to bring him back, the Chaplain said; "***There He goes son. There He goes.***" We all saw this in "911" as firemen and policemen would bring someone out of the burning, crumbling buildings, and keep going back until they didn't come back.

The Christmas Story also tells of One who came to us; and the wood of His trough (manger) would rub up against the wood of His cross in 33 years. Adrian Rogers said, "Jesus was born in a stable, because that is where lambs are born and Jesus is 'Mary's little lamb'." - **the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29). God has not asked us to go through, what He was not willing to go through also.

A first responder at "911" told me he would never forget, or get over, the sound of bodies hitting the sidewalks as people jumped from above. Max Lucado wrote a little tract for those workers and in it, he said to each one personally:

"Jesus looked at the cross and saw hell,
but He went there anyway, because
He did not want to go to heaven without you."