



Newsmaker Commentary

A whole week has passed since a deranged man lay siege on an Amish school in Pennsylvania's Lancaster County last week. This man shot ten girls and then killed himself. This tragedy has become a haunting reminder of the world today. Why does God allow such senseless tragedy? One can never really answer such a question in human terms, because we automatically want to place blame. God is love. In the same way the Jesus wept while he walked the earth, he grieves with us in our most difficult times. Psalm 147:3: "He heals the broken-hearted; he binds up the wounds."

While the Amish seem a bit extreme in their lifestyle that rejects modern conveniences and insulates them from influence in popular culture in the outside world, they represent a set of values of simpler times. They have managed to preserve a way of life that once existed in the mainstream, but that now society has lost. The eldest of the five Amish girls shot dead in the Amish schoolhouse is said to have volunteered asking the killer to "Shoot me first," laying down her life for that of her schoolmates. John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." The headlines have been filled with one tremendous example after another of just who God represents to their community. It has been widely publicized that the Amish reacted with love and forgiveness and reached out to the shooter's family, even attending his funeral as well. Knowing that bad things happen and that life does go on, the Amish have given us in the mainstream an example that we ought not to forget. While our normal reaction would be to lash out, let us learn to apply this week what we learned from the Amish.

So many times we will still wonder why evil things happen? This can best be summed up in the following excerpts of public comments made by *Rev. Bo Matthews, pastor of Brandywine Valley Baptist Church in Talleyville, DE.* (As posted www.delawareonline.com) "A few others make the giant leap of saying, "If God is supposed to be all powerful and compassionate and doesn't prevent what happened to those children, then I don't believe in God. Such a God would be a monster." That is a possibility, but I have a question. If there is no God, whom do I see about what happened Monday in Lancaster County? And about my grief, anger, and confusion? And about all the other senseless human violence. And about the impersonal violence of earthquake, hurricane, and fire?"... "Without God I would have all the tragedy and all the emotion and no one to turn to, who might help me make sense of it some day and even bring something good out of the evil."..." Unimaginable evil and unimaginable good stared us in the face last week. And we saw unimaginable goodness begin to redeem the evil. Mr. Roberts meant evil in that one-room schoolhouse, but God meant it for good; just the way He did on Good Friday, when envy and political expediency crucified Jesus, and God raised Him from the dead."

