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ISSUES AND VIEWS  
**OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH**  
1000 W. Raleigh, North Carolina 27612-5362

Phone: (704) 781-1310  
E-mail: [office@mabc.org](mailto:office@mabc.org)  
Web Page: [www.mabc.org](http://www.mabc.org)

**“Southern Baptists with the Full  
Gospel for the Whole World”**

SAM GORE, Senior Pastor  
EDITH JACKSON, Prayer Coordinator

NANCY MCBRAYER, Office Manager  
MIKE KING, Maintenance Supervisor

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*In times of crisis, it is easier to find a scapegoat than for a society to admit that perhaps some of its own structures are broken.*

The quote above was copied from an Internet blog in which the author was discussing the horrific tragedy that occurred in Newtown, Connecticut recently. In the hours and days following the mass murder, people who were offering explanations and opinions attempted to explain and opine. Some still do. Most of it seems to ring hollow, as though there is an alternate explanation to consider. But this sentence in the article did capture my attention—at least for a moment. Why is it that we attempt to assign meaning to explain the horror that interrupts our human experience? Why do we try to make sense out of death with such empty reasoning?

Human beings are meaning makers—we try to interpret the events and experiences of life, especially in the wake of death. It’s the way we’re made. There is purpose to life and there are reasons for death. Even when it is not reasonable. But to many in our broader culture, when I say we were made to interpret meaning, there can be a basic disagreement revealed in our thinking. Some would object to the assertion that we were made. We have no maker. We have made ourselves, shaped by economic, social, or physical factors. We have evolved as an accident in nature. This is the popular cultural point. There is no Creator. This is perhaps the ultimate in arrogance on display. Even ancient cultures have falsely believed in gods who have the power to create and bring order. Our culture has a belief that is not only ultimately arrogant, but preposterously ignorant. Blasphemous too, I might add. This view holds that we have been created by *nothing*. Instead of God creating this universe from nothing, this view holds that *nothing* is our god, so therefore nothing will be explained. There are no answers. Or maybe there are many answers which ultimately mean nothing. If this view were the reality it would be a hopeless point of view. But as we hear lately in our church, hope has a Name.

*Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)*

When you try to make meaning out of death and explain it away, the only view that makes sense out of senselessness is the Biblical view. Biblical views have no bearing to those who do not believe in a Creator that transcends our experience and is outside our boundaries of time and space. God has given us explanations of death and destruction. Its roots are ancient. Death is the bitter fruit of sin. When man believed he could live one moment without dependence upon the Lord God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and acted upon that belief, sin was implanted within the nature of man—and it bore the bitter fruit of death. Humanism is one of the beliefs that has emerged and become one of the structures that will yield destruction. It has been taught and believed that we can live apart from God’s influence as long as we are influential enough, affluent enough, and intelligent enough. Humanism has emerged in the American experience. We didn’t invent it. We have just embraced it. And when humans try to rationalize death and destruction as a product of something other than sin, we begin to look like the first human ancestor that tried to rationalize sin as the fault of another. Sinners are blame shifters.

The sentence quoted from the blog above quickly moved into finding fault with those who blame the mother of the shooter, who owned the guns that her troubled son used. After chastising the finger-pointers in society, he pointed the finger at the gun lobby, and then people who owned them. There always seems to be an agenda. Always an angle to promote what one thinks. God has one. His agenda is the truth. *The wages of sin is death.* And the problem is the sin of humanity. His solution is Life. Hope has a name. Jesus the Christ has come to live to die so we can die to live. My prayer for the coming year is for the people of God, those of us who wear the name of Christian, those the culture calls *Christian*, to begin to get as serious about the sin in their lives as God is about the sin of humanity. We are to live as ambassadors of Christ the King in a nation who has believed that they can live independently without dependence upon God—in our hearts—in our homes—in our schools—in our jobs—in our churches—in our culture. To represent Christ is to weep with those who weep, and keep close company with a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief.

*O Lord, help us to repent from our attitude as a complacent, apathetic, and powerless church. Let our hearts break from what breaks Your heart...forgive us for fearful living...teach us to live for a living!*

New Year’s Blessings to you,  
Pastor Sam