

...as follows in Jesus' name:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dearly Beloved, People loved by God,

I can't think of a better text for us to meditate on after the assassination of Charlie Kirk on Wednesday.

For those who do not know who he is, he was the founder of Turning Point USA.

He would go onto college and university campuses and freely speak with/debate with anyone, whether they were friendly or hostile toward him or his views.

He would set up a booth with a sign saying, "Change my mind."

In fact, that's what he was doing in Utah when he was shot.

We, the public, know rather little about his assassin so far;

but reports have been given that some of his bullet casings had political messages written on them and it has also been reported that he had become radicalized within the last months, and expressed resentment towards Charlie Kirk's politically conservative views.

And, in Charlie's thinking, his views were based upon his Christian faith & confession.

His college and university events were planned based upon his love, not only for his country, but also for his fellow man, because, as he saw it, bad policies hurt not just the nation, but the people.

But he didn't just care about the physical life and well-being of those he interacted with, he also cared about their souls – and so he made it a point to share his confession of faith as well, so that they knew that Jesus Christ was their crucified and risen Savior, too.

But there's more, that happened this past week:

the senseless stabbing of the Ukrainian woman (Iryna Zarutka) caught on camera in Georgia, the school shooting in Colorado, that critically injured two fellow students, and these, during the week when we remember the 9-11 attacks of 24 years ago.

...

There has been a lot of hurt expressed this week over airwaves, screens, and social media posts.

There is frustration... fear... anger... at this wicked, heinous, and cowardly act and hatred for those who planned and perpetrated it.

Just as there has also been levity, excitement, even joy expressed by some at his passing, which raises even more the ire of those who appreciated him, and shocks many even who disagreed with him.

I bring up Charlie's assassination, not because I want to start a political debate, but because thoughts and emotions are still raw and very real.

You have had some time since Wednesday to consider the situation for yourself, to read and/or listen to the various commentators, perhaps both Christian and secular, and very likely the majority of you have seen more than a few social posts reflecting on the situation. Where have your thoughts led you? What have you determined about the situation?

...
This reminds me of another pretty famous event in history.

A successful assassination had just taken place... only it was much slower of a death... and it had the governor's authorization.

We find two of the disciples walking on a road to Emmaus, doing the same thing that you've been doing, **talking together of all these things which had happened, conversing and reasoning...** trying to make sense of it. Luke 24:14-15

Their emotions were still raw and real... they felt frustrated, helpless, hopeless, angry? ...

They had lots of fingers to point in blame, who wouldn't hate cowardly Pontius Pilate?

Or the evil High Priest Caiaphas? Or the easily swayed mob shouting for Jesus to be crucified?

And yet, when the stranger came up to them and started talking with them,

seemingly unaware of all that had happened over the last 3 days,

He didn't help them point fingers at anybody – in blame for the death of the Christ.

Instead He pointed the two disciples to the Scriptures, beginning with Moses and the prophets, showing how it was necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory.

Now remind me... how that story ended?

Wasn't there a resurrection from the dead?

What had looked very much like a complete and utter defeat – wasn't.

We celebrate that day as the most glorious victory for humanity... that is until the Last Day.

And every year, we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead... even in a cemetery of all places,

because it helps us to remember the resurrection from the dead that all those who believe in Jesus will experience when He returns in glory.

So do not be sad for Charlie. Do not even be angry for Charlie.

Like John the Baptist, who was cut down in what we would consider to be the prime of his life,

He has attained the crown of life, his Savior's reward, and now rests from his many labors.

The Lord, in His infinite and gracious wisdom, has chosen that his work here is done.

But what of Charlie's family? How should we feel about them?

First, **weep with those who weep.** Romans 12:15

Whether you were a fan or disagreed, mourn the absence of a faithful husband and good father.

Second, you can pray for justice. The Lord desires that gov'ts act justly,

so as to protect the lives and livelihoods of the citizenry.

Pray that the suspect be given a fair trial under the laws of our land and that a just verdict be reached.

We have been reminded, even before the suspect was caught, that Utah still has the death penalty.

If he is found guilty and he is sentenced to death, we know that this is a legitimate sentence, Genesis 9:6

as the Lord spoke to Noah, "**Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed,**"

and St. Paul also reminds us that the gov't **does not bear the sword in vain.**

Romans 13:4

For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

But in both of these prayers (for Charlie's family and for justice),

guard your heart and mind and consider Jesus' words in our text,
"But **I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.**"

There's a lot of anger and hatred being spewed by many, and not just toward the assassin.

People feeling justified in their rage toward those they consider to be on the "other side."

But wasn't it this kind of anger and hatred and rage and self-justification that led the assassin to act?

The devil would love for you to consider yourself the judge, jury, and executioner, just as he tempted the murderer to be.

And yet, this is not the way of your heavenly Father who in His mercy gives a time of grace to all, allowing **His sun to rise on the** assassin and the widow, **and sending rain on the** murderer and the orphans.

But what about your anger and rage, your frustration and your pain?

What are you, a baptized child of God, to do with that?

Perhaps, first and foremost, recognize that it is the result of a hurting conscience which feels guilt, not only for the sins that you have committed against others,

but also has a feeling of guilt for sins that others have perpetrated against others.

It hurts – and so, as the conscience is to do, it prompts you to action... so take action, by examining your conscience.

1. Is it hurting because of the actions of this one man against Charlie?

Romans 12:19

Then remember what St. Paul teaches in the 12 chapter of Romans: **Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."**

The Lord has established His authorities. It is their duty to carry out justice.

Do not burden yourself... your mind... your heart... with that heavy responsibility. It is not yours.

But while he awaits trial & before his potential sentence is carried out, pray for him, as Jesus told us to do: **pray for those who persecute you.**

Pray that this blood-bought soul would repent of his sins and know the Savior that Charlie confessed.

2. Is your conscience hurting for his widow and children?

First, realize that the death penalty will never take away that pain... not for Charlie's widow, nor his children.

The death penalty is a function of the Law and the Law does not alleviate your feeling of guilt.

It does not assuage anger, hatred, or pain.

Instead, pray for this family, that they would hold firmly to their faith in Christ's death & resurrection and so be comforted, knowing that they will see Charlie again, along with their Savior, in paradise.

3. Is your conscience hurting because of the actions and words of many people

who you believe to have incited and fomented the anger that leads to hate... that leads to murder?

Is it hurting because of the words of those who are responsible for reporting the news

but do so, seemingly intentionally, with bias or only according to the narrative they want to push?

Or is it hurting because of those who are serving or who have served in government, who have spoken or acted unjustly, or failed to perform their oath and duties?

Or is it hurting because of the words of anger and hatred of the crowd, whether in person or online?

It is true that our nation is hurting. This should not be surprising because hurting people hurt people.

When our consciences hurt but we don't know why, or we mis-diagnose the reason why we hurt, we tend to lash out in anger, even hatred, causing more pain and anger and hatred.

That cycle doesn't stop itself. It doesn't end by causing more pain.

So our Lord gives us the solution, "**Love your enemies and pray for them.**"

Ask the Lord to make His Son, Jesus Christ, rise (and shine) on their souls, and that He would rain on them the showers of His forgiveness...

that their **evil** and **injustice** may be removed from them as far as the east is from the west, and that they may know His peace and love and kindness that you yourself have received.

4. Is your conscience hurting because of your own actions or words, whether spoken or typed... or only thought or festering...

Your own anger-filled contribution that has fueled the fires and caused hurt?

Have you "spoken the truth,"

but failed to do as St. Paul admonished in Ephesians 4, **Speak the truth in love.** Ephesians 4:15

Have you loved only those who agree with you?

Are you only able to bring yourself to greet those brothers who share your views and opinions, and yet complain that the "other side" won't talk to you?

Have you allowed yourself to justify any animosity towards those who disagree with you?

Know then that self-justification is the worse kind of justification,

because it gives you the feeling of security, where there is, in fact, none, and induces **pride which comes before the fall.** Proverbs 16:18

For the Lord does not say, "**love your neighbor and hate your enemy,**"

or even "do your best to love your enemy, unless it's really hard, then you don't,"

but He says, "**You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**"

If you are not perfect, then don't be surprised if your conscience is also hurting because of your own sin.

Don't let the pain and hurt you feel from the sins of others mask over your own guilt, nor let it make you feel as if you are better than them, or less sinful than them.

The same sin passed down from Adam infects you, as it does me, as it does them.

The Father does not **make His sun rise on** you because of any natural **good,**

nor does **He send rain on** you because you are naturally **just.**

It is not self-justification that will comfort your heart, for the Law can never truly give comfort.

Instead it is the Lord who justifies, who has declared you righteous... that is: **good,** and **just,**

and He does that based solely upon the perfect love of Jesus Christ for neighbor and enemy alike — Jesus, who prayed for those who persecuted and crucified Him, "**Father, forgive them...**" Luke 23:34

Jesus, who gave up His perfect life as the atonement

for the sins of the assassin and of those in gov't and of those in the media

and of your neighbors and enemies online, at work, and in your neighborhood,

just as He has made full atonement of your sins for you, that He could declare you **good** and **just.**

Let His justification of you sink in.

Let the light of the Son awake in your heart the love of your heavenly Father.

Let the rain showers of forgiveness flow over you and on to others.

And be free of your guilt and pain and burden.

If hurting people hurt people,

isn't also true that the Lord uses people whom He has healed by the love of Christ crucified to bring that same cruciform love to others that they may be healed as well?

Yes, speak the truth. Speak the truth in love... and speak the truth of Jesus' love,

not in an abstract way,

but speak of His love that led Him to His crucifixion for your sins and their sins,

that He may free them of their guilt and anger and hatred, just as He has done for you.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria