

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intro

I don't want to preach this sermon.

- I shouldn't have to preach this sermon.

This is NOT how I wanted my next to last sermon to go.

I had planned to continue with what I said last week, to gently wrap things up and help to point you to the future – but then we got the news of the murder of 19 children and 2 teachers in Uvalde, Texas, and that sermon went out the window.

For me not to preach on this tragic event is wrong, and not to confront this evil in our lives is nothing short of misconduct.

So here we are: with a sermon I didn't want to write and a sermon you don't want to hear – but we MUST – if anything is going to change – if these children and their teachers are not to die in vain – than we must talk about this.

I. Uvalde

A. This past week, we were all STUNNED by another mass shooting – the third one in 10 days:

1. On May 14th, there was the mass shooting in Buffalo, New York, killing 10 black people as they simply went to the store to buy groceries.

2. The next day, May 15th, was the shooting at an Asian Church, a couple of hours away in Laguna Woods.

3 And on May 24th, 19 children and 2 teachers were killed as they sat in their classroom two days before the end of school.

- They hadn't even finished burying the victims from Buffalo before we had another mass shooting.

4. We shake our heads – how can this be, we wonder – well, wrap your heads around this: **we are only 21 weeks into the year and America has had seen 213 mass shootings!**

- 213 mass shootings THIS YEAR – and that doesn't count all the other random acts of violence and shootings that takes place on our city streets.

5. And what do all these shootings have in common? GUNS.

6. On May 25th the Washington Post Headline stated that since 2020 **Guns have killed more children than cars;**

- and that continued in 2021 and is continuing now.

7. And now it has to stop.

B. On March 15th, 2019, a gunman opened fire on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, during Friday Prayers, killing 50 people and injuring many more.

- Three days later, members of the cabinet agreed to develop a massive overhaul of the nation's gun laws, including **a ban on military-assault weapons.**

1. It's been three days since Uvalde, what is our political leaders' response?

- Gun safety legislation passed by the House continues to be stalled in the Senate;

- Politicians quickly rushed to the podium to plead that we not politicize this tragic event;

- And the NRA holds its convention in Houston – 4 hours away from Uvalde – and politicians and others stream to the event to tell us: “The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good guy with a gun.”

2. And consider this, until he opened fire with his weapons, the Texas gunman did not break a single law in Texas.

3. You may have seen the response of NBA coach, **Steve Kerr**, who decried this situation and the fact that time after time nothing changes.

- As he pounded the table and exclaimed, “When are we going to do something... I'm tired of the moments of silence – enough.”

4. He said, “There’s 50 Senators who refuse to vote on HR8 which is a background check rule that the House passed a couple of years ago. It’s been sitting there for two years. And the reason they won’t vote on it is to hold on to power.”

5. He went on to ask those Senators, “Are you going to put your own desire for power ahead of the lives of our children, and our elderly, and our church goers, because that’s what it looks like.”

6. He concluded saying, “You realize 90% of Americans, regardless of political party, want universal background checks? But we are being held hostage by 50 Senators in Washington who refuse to even put it to a vote, despite what we the American people want, they won’t vote on it because they want to hold on to their own power.”

C. Now, I’m not looking to take away all the guns – if you want to take your rifle hunting, fine – if you want to go target shooting with your pistol, fine - marksmanship is an Olympic Sport – in both the Summer and Winter games – but who on God’s green earth needs an AR-15?

1. As a responsible citizen I have a Driver’s License, and Proof of Insurance to drive my CAR – which I have to register – why don’t I need to do the same thing to own a gun?

2. Some say, “Cars kill more people than guns,” and statistically that may be true – but the purpose of a car is transportation – the only purpose there is for a gun is to kill.

- That’s it – the only purpose for a gun is to kill – especially an AR-15 Military-style assault rifle.

II. Unity for Change

A. So, as **Steve Kerr** said, what are we going to do about it?

1. Angela Davis once said, “I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.”

2. And that certainly applies here.

3. Rabbi Mark Asher Goodman posted on Facebook,

- “In Judaism, if you say a prayer over something, then fail to do the requisite action that follows, like blessing bread and not eating it, it’s a *bracha levatla* – which is a sinful act.

- “If you pray for victims of gun violence and do nothing, it is a sinful act.”

B. In our Gospel reading Jesus prays for his Disciples and those to come in future generations that they all may be ONE as He and the Father are ONE.

1. And as we have heard the past few Sundays, Jesus **LOVED THEM** into UNITY – so then, the **UNITY** for which Jesus prays comes from Jesus’ love.

2. Two weeks ago, we heard Jesus give his commandment to love: “*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*”

3. Last week, we heard Jesus say, “*Those who love me will keep my word ...*”

4. And now the formula is complete: for when we live out Jesus’ Commandment to Love – and open ourselves to God’s love that is flowing all around us, and channel that love to our hurting world – we will know Christ’s peace; and thus be living in the UNITY that Jesus prays for.

5. But to do this – we have to DO something.

C. In October, Camp Stevens is offering a “Restorative Justice Retreat” as part of their 70th Anniversary Celebration – the Keynote speaker of the event, **Valarie Kaur** offers these thoughts:

1. “Grieving with people in the face of this kind of loss, this kind of injustice and violence—being present to their pain—is about building new relationships... Our solidarity is only as deep as our ability to love one another. And our ability to love one another is only as deep as our ability to weep with one another. Who we grieve with determines who we fight for.”

2. Doing something is as simple as grieving with another and just holding them tight.

3. And as we strive to live into Jesus' Unity, the Great Christian Author, Henri Nouwen offers these ideas for self-reflection:

- "Did I offer peace today?"
- "Did I bring a smile to someone's face?"
- "Did I say words of healing?"
- "Did I let go of my anger and resentment?"
- "Did I forgive?"
- "Did I love?"
- "These are the real questions."

Conclusion

So often in these circumstance we offer our "**Thoughts and Prayers**" – well, we just had thoughts and now we are going to end with prayer.

In November 2018 following the Borderline shooting in Thousand Oaks, Bishops United Against Gun Violence — an activist group of bishops in the Episcopal Church working to create gun legislation that will reduce the number of people killed and wounded by gunfire— offered a "Litany in the Wake of a Mass Shooting" to commemorate the dead, to comfort their loved ones, and to honor survivors and first responders.

We are going to pray that Litany NOW – and then we will have some silence so that we might reflect on what we can do together to help bring to an end this curse on our lives and our society.

Each PETITION ends with the words "Give to the departed eternal rest"

- and the RESPONSE IS "Let light perpetual shine upon them". [repeat]

Let us pray:

Litany in the Wake of a Mass Shooting

God of peace, we remember all those who have died in incidents of mass gun violence in this nation's public and private spaces.

Six dead at the Wisconsin Sikh Temple.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Twelve dead at an Aurora, Colorado movie theater.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Twenty-eight dead at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Six dead at Santa Monica College, California.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Seven dead at a Hialeah, Florida apartment complex.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Thirteen dead at the Washington Navy Yard.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at Fort Hood, Texas.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Seven dead in Isla Vista, near UC Santa Barbara.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at Marysville Pilchuck High School in Washington.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Six dead in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Nine dead at Emanuel AME in Charleston, South Carolina.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Sixteen dead at a San Bernardino, California office.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Ten dead at Umpqua Community College, Oregon.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Six dead in Kalamazoo, Michigan.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at a Hesston, Kansas office.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at a Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania backyard party.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Fifty dead at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at Cascade Mall in Burlington, Washington.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at Fort Lauderdale Airport.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead in Fresno, California.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Eight dead in Lincoln County, Mississippi.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at an Eaton Township, Pennsylvania supermarket.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Nine dead at a Plano, Texas football-watching party.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Fifty-nine dead at a Las Vegas, Nevada concert.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Twenty-seven dead at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Seventeen dead at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at the Veterans Home in Yountville, California.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at a Nashville, Tennessee Waffle House.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Ten dead at Santa Fe High School, Texas.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at the Capital Gazette Newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at the Fifth Third Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at a Rite Aid distribution center in Aberdeen, Maryland.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Eleven dead at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Thirteen dead at a bar in Thousand Oaks, California.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at a bank in Sebring, Florida.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at their homes in Ascension and Livingston parishes, Louisiana.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Six dead at an industrial park in Aurora, Illinois.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at a home in Clinton, Mississippi.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead in Solon Township, Michigan.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Thirteen dead at a municipal building in Virginia Beach, Virginia.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at the Gilroy Garlic Festival in Gilroy, California.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Twenty-two dead at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Ten dead at the Oregon District of downtown Dayton, Ohio.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Eight dead on the road between the cities of Odessa and Midland, Texas.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead in their home in Elkmont, Alabama.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at a bar in Kansas City, Kansas.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at a backyard football watch party in Fresno, California
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Six dead at a cemetery and kosher market in Jersey City, New Jersey.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Six dead at the Molson Coors complex in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at a convenience store in Springfield, Missouri.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead in the northeast side of Indianapolis, Indiana.
Give to the departed eternal rest
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Eight dead at three spas in Atlanta, Georgia.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Ten dead at a grocery store in Boulder, Colorado.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at an office complex in Orange, California.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Six dead at a home in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Nine dead at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Seven dead at a birthday party in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Ten dead at a rail yard in San Jose, California.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Four dead at Oxford High School in Oxford Township, Michigan.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead in Lakewood and Denver, Colorado.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Five dead at The Church in Sacramento, California.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Six dead in downtown Sacramento, California.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Ten dead at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

Twenty-two dead at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas.

Give to the departed eternal rest

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

All those who have died in any incident of gun violence.
Give to the departed eternal rest.
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

The RESPONSE to these Petitions is “Hear us, Lord.”

For survivors of gun violence.
Grant them comfort and healing.
Hear us, Lord.

For those who have lost loved ones to gun violence.
Grant them peace.
Hear us, Lord.

For those first responders who care for victims of gun violence.
Protect and strengthen them.
Hear us, Lord.

And we conclude with the Kyrie:

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.