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THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

This last week brought us another horrific historical event. Nineteen dear students and two teachers in Uvalde, TX, were killed in a random act of violence by an 18-year-old Salvador Ramos. Reports tell us he also killed his grandmother before going to Robb Elementary School on his rampage. The husband of one of the slain teachers has since died in an apparent heart attack. The family said the grief of losing his wife brought this calamity. The tragedies continue to climb in the aftermath of this shooting. **554 Dead Since 1999.** Though we know that school shootings have happened before 1999 (the earliest recorded in 1840), it seems that since the Columbine (CO) school shooting, these events have been on our "radar screens." I saw a posting that said there have been 554 people killed in school shootings since 1999.[1] To put it mildly, this is a severe problem we face in this country. Let me hasten to add the number "554" does not include school shootings or other violent

behavior that has taken place worldwide. This number reflects only the shootings in the US since 1999. When we are faced with these events, the voices seeking to ban all guns are the loudest heard. It is believed that if guns were banned, or at the very least, made harder to obtain than they are currently, such acts of violence would be avoided. Obviously, if guns were outlawed, then the statistics for death and injury by gun violence would be significantly lowered. If firearms are not available to the majority of citizens, they obviously would not be able to shoot one another. **What Is The Answer To The Violence?** However, is the banning of firearms the answer to violence? Let me suggest this response is short-sighted. Outlawing guns might have a temporary effect of lowering a statistic. However, someone determined to do violence to others will find a weapon, whether it is a fist, a

baseball bat, a stick or stone, a bomb, a sword, a knife, a book, a chain, a whip, a board, a chair, (you see my point?), etc. In the right hands, almost anything can become a weapon (even our words!). I remember a school bus ride when I was in the 4th or 5th grade, and an older boy got upset and broke a coke bottle (we had glass bottles back then) and began swinging the broken bottle around in an attempt to cut the bus driver! He had no gun or knife, but he had a broken glass bottle he was ready to plunge into anyone who came near him! There was not a gun within a mile of us that day, yet lives were threatened. If certain people had witnessed what I had, I wonder what they would suggest we ban? **Violence Is A Matter Of "Heart Control."**

Violence is in a person's heart, and it will come out if we do not get these feelings under control! Remember Cain (Gen. 4:1-11)? I see no record in the Bible of what weapon (if any) Cain used against Abel, but I know that after their argument, Abel was dead (Gen. 4:8)! Friends, could I suggest it is not another law we need. Instead, we need Jesus! Jesus taught, *"Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and goes into the sewer? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile a man. For out of the heart come*

evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man" (Matt. 15:17-20, LSB). Paul said something similar. *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (I Cor. 9:27). He later wrote, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (II Cor. 10:3-5). We are encouraged to think about things that are *"true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (Phil. 4:8). What do those four passages show us? They show that if we think about something long enough, we will do it! If we think about something long enough, we will say it! Therefore, let us think about things that are godly, lovely, pure, honest, etc. (Phil.

4:8)! This will bless us! Thinking on the wicked and ungodly defiles us! **What Is Going Into Our Minds?** In the case of the Uvalde shooting, we cannot talk to Salvador Ramos about his motivation, for he was shot during the event. However, there are others who have committed violent acts that can be interviewed. Often, those who have committed violent acts will say that their actions resulted from time spent thinking about violent things. Sometimes, bullying motivates people's wickedness (think: revenge). At other times, something else was the motivation. Yet, it can be agreed that at the beginning, these people were thinking about things they should not have been thinking about. After a while, thoughts became actions, just as the Bible warns! Friends, our brains retain everything seen, heard, smelled, felt, tasted, etc. It is not like we can think about something evil and then turn on the "garbage disposal" and send it away! These things stay in the mind. This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 15! This is why Paul said to think about the good and righteous things (Phil. 4:8)! We think about the right things in expectation that this is what will come out in our words and actions, and not the evil. **The Answer To Much Of The Violence We Witness.** We mentioned above the need for Jesus' teaching and the need to

listen to the words of Scripture. Allow the words of truth (Jn. 17:17) to guide us in our youth and into our old age (Ecc. 11:9-12:1). To accomplish what the Bible describes, it means we need people alert and doing their jobs! We need to care for others and realize we are our "brother's keeper" (Gen. 4:9; Matt. 7:12, 22:39; Gal. 6:2; Jas. 2:8)! Parents, where are you? Our children need direction, focus, and discipline. Guiding them in correct thinking now while their brains are still maturing will help them cope and overcome when they face hardships in the future. This is not the job of school teachers. This is the parents' job! *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4, LSB, NAS)! Mothers need to be *"in behavior as becometh holiness ... teach the young women ..."* (Titus 2:3-5). In addition to these, let older men *"be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance"* (Titus 2:2, LSB). Never forget the power we have to influence others. Therefore, let us make sure we are influencing people in a godly way (Matt. 5:14-16)! Who knows, but a word or action by a parent, grandparent, sibling, or even a respected person could mean the difference between life and death! Yes, it is that important! - Jarrod Jacobs

FIFTH SUNDAY PHOTOS

Every fifth Sunday of the month, we try to highlight some of great things happening around our congregation that were captured through photography. If you happen to get a good picture of one of those great things, please feel free to post it on our Facebook page, tag us on Instagram (@wellsburgchurch), tweet us at @wellsburgchurch, or e-mail us at minister@wellsburgchurchofchrist.com with a little description of what is happening in the picture.



A wonderful crew of helpers showed up to help bring in the new chairs into the building! Thank you so much to all the great helpers!



Michael Hersey did a fantastic job leading the song leading worship and teaching and preaching about glorified worship to God. Thank you very much!



Carol fits right in with all the kids in the wagon taking a tour of Eric's farm! Thank you, Eric, for hosting the Friday Night Bible Study and letting us enjoy the beautiful scenery for a wonderful evening!



Roland and Roo are having a great time strategically placing the painted rocks in places they can be readily noticed! Thanks to all who helped paint and place them so others can learn about the work here!