

St. Mary's Episcopal Church

Message by Rev. Michael Burke

7th Sunday of Easter (May 29, 2022)



**“If you’ve been raised from the dead,  
can you still turn over in your grave?”**

*Alert: I’m going to be talking about hard things, including citing some statistics of school shootings.*

Good morning.

This is hard – what we all have been doing. Here we are again as we have been so many times before. According to the list kept on Wikipedia, Uvalde, TX is the 268<sup>th</sup> shooting at an American school since 2000.<sup>1</sup> You heard that correctly – the 268<sup>th</sup> shooting on school grounds.

You can check it later: It is under “*List of school shootings in the U.S.*,” and it has 486 citations or documented references and footnotes.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_school\\_shootings\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_school_shootings_in_the_United_States)

268 school shootings amount to more than one shooting at a school per month every month for 22 years. It is an absolutely unrelenting onslaught. I won't even try to read you the names or tell you the numbers of children and teachers killed.

But each image... of each face... of each child, or teacher, or of a grieving and shocked community... is indelible. As we have learned the particulars of their lives, the tiny details that comprise their lives, we realize they could be *our* children, *our* niece, *our* nephew, *our* grandchild, *our* parent, *our* friend, *our* co-worker, *our* police officer. And so this hits us all at a very deep level.

Am I angry as I stand here? Am I grieving? Am I deeply saddened beyond words? Am I numb from the endless parades of images and information over the past week? Yes, of course, I am all of those things, as perhaps you have been since this past Tuesday.

But I won't attempt to channel all of those feelings this morning, or even attempt to plumb the depths of all of *your* feelings. If my expressions this morning are not angry enough, or sad enough, or compassionate enough to match your own, I can only say that this is an emotional roller coaster for us all. An hour from now, I might be on a different up-slope or down-slope at any given moment. And I'm trying to keep it together as I imagine you are.

And I won't try to repeat much of the reflection and commentary you have likely seen or heard in media over the past few days. I trust that unless you are trying hard *not* to be paying attention to that, it is inescapable.

What I will do, is try to offer some context of a different sort, that might be helpful as we process our reactions and organize our varied responses.

Along the way I will invite us to look, of all places, at the Psalm which Karl read for us this morning. It is about idolatry. We'll come back to that.

But let me start in another place.

In the early 1960s, the American religious landscape and mainstream culture was dominated by what was called "mainline Christianity"<sup>2</sup>, specifically what was called the "seven sisters" of ecumenical Christianity, The United Methodist Church, The ELCA Lutheran Church, The Episcopal Church, The Presbyterian Church USA, The Disciples of Christ, The United Church of Christ, and The American Baptist Church (not to be confused with the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. The American Baptists were the anti-slavery party within the Baptist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.)

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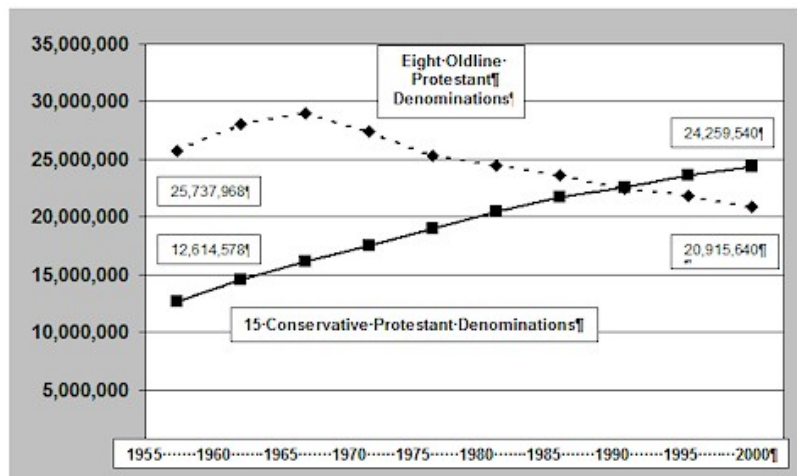
<sup>2</sup> <https://fccmelrose.org/2020/02/11/the-mainline-seven-sisters/>, and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainline\\_Protestant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainline_Protestant)

These “seven sisters,” of ecumenical Christianity, as they were called, once constituted the majority faith in the United States.<sup>3</sup> And despite their differences and many failings, and their many accommodations to American civic life, they largely preached and portrayed an image of God, and also of Jesus, which was derived from the Holy Scriptures and church history and tradition.

It was an image of a loving, compassionate God whose character was to “oppose the proud and lift up the lowly,” to borrow the words of the Magnificat. Although those churches struggled amidst the social changes of the 1960s and 70s, at the core of their practice was what was called “the social Gospel,” the belief that sin was not just individual but social and societal as well, and those churches largely participated in the social movements of the 1960s, such as civil rights, the rights of women, peace movements, environmental justice, and later the place of those who were gay or lesbian in the church and society. These were also the same churches who were hit first and hardest by the rising secularism of the decades. In short, “greatest generation” and “silent generation” parents raised their children in those churches, but many of the “baby boom” and generations following left the church and found their place as unaffiliated or “spiritual but not religious.” For many, churches were stuffy, hypocritical, or irrelevant, and they left without much of a feeling of loss.

But the decline of those churches in contemporary American cultural and political life, left a vacuum that was soon filled by an amalgamation of evangelical, charismatic, and fundamentalists churches that leaned heavily conservative in their theology and politics.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of what was called the “religious right,” Moral Majority, and numerous “big box” megachurches and ministries. Into the void left behind by the decline of the mainline churches, they quickly expanded their reach and influence, and began building their own institutions, organizations, and marketplace that fostered a new intensity of “Christian culture” with its own set of images and values. Many of them adopted slick modern marketing approaches based on the consumer culture of a generation raised on shopping and choices. But behind the earnest hip young pastor with the skinny jeans, soul patch, and cool worship band was the same old male-dominated structure and selective theology.



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>. See also: [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/roozen\\_article5.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/roozen_article5.html).

In place of the social Gospel of the mainline churches, and without the rigors of a lectionary – that defined calendar of Scripture readings that force a preacher and congregation to be exposed to a broad cross-section of the Bible over every repeating three-year cycle – they preached and taught three successive generations of church-going folks a version of “Christianity” that reflected their underlying values: God as authoritarian, a compassionate Savior serving a Supreme Judge whose anger, wrath, and judgement was drawn from numerous Old Testament texts. But lost was the critical distinction that even in the Old Testament, God’s wrath was expressed as *righteous indignation*, never at the *victims* of injustice or oppression, but always at the *perpetrators of injustice*.

In this Christian subculture, God’s “maleness” was emphasized, not as simply an artifact of gendered language, but as an essential part of God’s character. The role of the “man of the house” was taught to be God-ordained, as we are made in the likeness of God, and to this image of God’s we should all submit and aspire. The male-led nuclear family, the exercise of dominion and power over, and submission to received authority were taught to be God’s will for humanity. This, ironically, but without any sense of shame they called “Bible-based,” although it was a highly selective, critically uninformed, and distorted reading of the whole of Scripture. During this time, this emerging “cultural Christianity” found common purpose with other ideologies, that would otherwise be anathema to following the Christ of the Gospels, including elements of a reactionary strain of Roman Catholicism, and a resurgent patriarchy, white nationalism, and white supremacy.

Three generations later, that is, today - we have seemingly everyday examples of things like the gubernatorial candidate of Georgia who is running for office with the slogan “Jesus, Guns, and Babies.”<sup>4</sup>

I don’t know if you are a fan of country music, but over the weekend I listened to a song by the Eric Durrance and the Tobacco Road band entitled “Jesus and Guns”.



The song references the long tradition in some churches of having a “red letter edition” of the King James Bible, in which the words of Jesus are color-coded. The chorus goes like this: “Live your life by those words written in red / Keep that gun locked and loaded by the bed / Protect your family at any cost / And remember that cross.”

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.in/international/news/gop-gubernatorial-candidate-running-on-jesus-guns-babies-platform-says-the-church-rules-the-state-of-georgia/articleshow/91732267.cms>

And in the wonders of the internet, as I listened to the song, the ad that popped up on the right of my screen was for a T-shirt. It read, “If Jesus had a gun, he’d be alive today.”

I was texting my sister in Texas telling her this, and she texted back an entirely appropriate theology question: “If you’ve been raised from the dead, can you still turn over in your grave?”

**Theology matters, the image you have of the character of God and Jesus matters, and the content of one’s faith matters.** The Psalm for today (see, I told you we’d circle back to that) – had the curious antiphon or refrain, “All worshippers of images are dismayed / Light is shown for the righteous.” It comes from a verse of the Psalm, which reads “All who worship carved images and delight in false gods are dismayed.” It was then, as it is now, a warning about idolatry.



The issue for ancient people as well as for people today has never really been about the idolatry of carved objects, but about the false images of God that they foster and represent. The dividing line is not between those who believe in God and those who do not. The dividing line is between those who believe in God and those who follow a false image of God.

In our contemporary context I would argue that a common false image of God is that of a muscular, hyper masculine Jesus who dominates and subdues. Of course, this is difficult to reconcile with the One who gave his life upon the cross in the face of the brutality and militarism of the Roman Empire, the Prince of Peace who told his disciple Peter to put away his sword. But for huge swaths of Americans, it is the only image of Jesus they have ever known.

**Theology matters, and the content of one’s faith matters.**

Perhaps those folks going door to door asking if we “know Jesus” are asking the wrong question. Maybe they should be asking, if you believe in Jesus, which Jesus exactly do you believe in? There seems to be two.

Which image of God do you live your life by? A compassionate God who offers even God’s own self to redeem a broken world, or some other image altogether? Which Jesus do you follow?

Friends, permit me to also say this:

As a nation, we’ve come a long way down the road in the past fifty years, and not to a good place. We are now in a situation where even reasonable middle ground is impossible to achieve. Politics was once was the art of coming together and legislation used to strive for common ground. A “win” for any side

was still a “win” for all of us, and politics was not seen as simply a zero-sum game in which the only thing that matters is running up the score on “your team’s side.” But today it is well known that any idea the “other team” might propose should be rejected outright simply because it is from the other political party and everything is understood to be on a “slippery slope.”

Today the American political landscape on gun safety and gun rights spans those on one far end who would ban all weapons, to those on the other far end who believe they have the God-given right to carry any weapon at any time under and under any circumstance without anything interfering with their individual constitutional right and freedom.

And I see us stepping further away from one another, not closer.

We could right now be taking action as a nation on an entire range of responses: from universal background checks, to improved weapon safety options, to red flag laws, to banning high-capacity ammunition magazines and the rate of rapid fire of any rifle, to early identification and support for those who are unbalanced, radicalized, and who would commit acts of violence. Of course it won’t stop every shooting. No laws ever do, but it would enable and secure legitimate hunting and most recreational purposes for long rifles, make for a stronger and safer America, even while it would admittedly restrict the exercise of rights of many.

Such common-sense proposals are widely supported by millions of Americans of differing political persuasions. But we ... Just. Can’t. Seem to get there.

It IS memorial day weekend, so let me conclude with this:

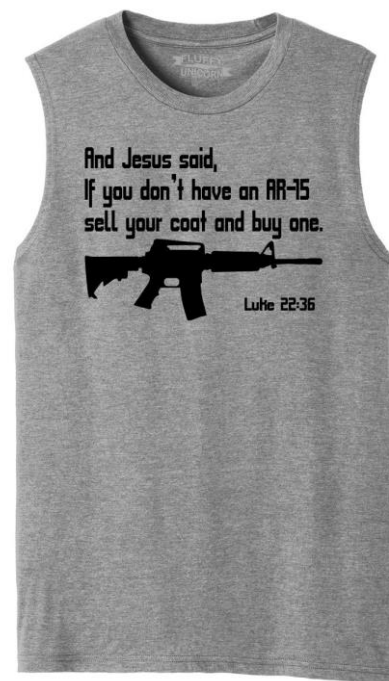
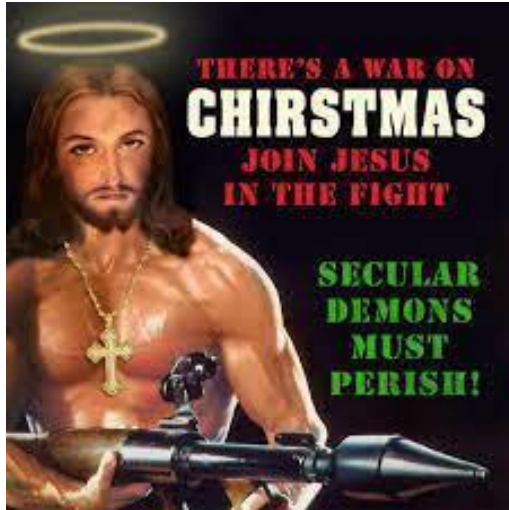
As a child I accompanied my father, who was the local American legion post commander, on each and every memorial day and veteran’s day. We carefully placed an American flag on the grave of all those who served or gave their life for our freedoms. I remember that I used to do the math in my head with the dates on the headstones – and many of those who died were between the ages of 18 and 30. So I learned very young that freedom isn’t “free,” and that it was paid for with the lives (usually back in those days) of sons, fathers, brothers. Their deaths left behind mothers and sisters and other brothers and lovers and children who had to find a way to mourn, rebuild their shattered lives, and carry on.

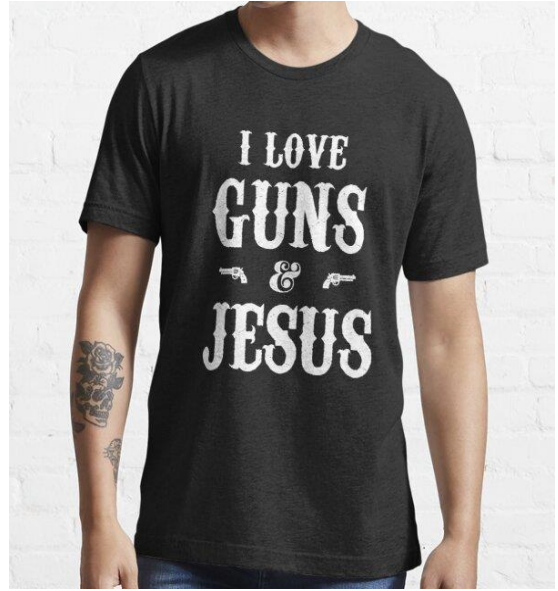
Well... the lesson? With freedom comes responsibility. I learned that as well... ...responsibility to one another and to the common good. Shared responsibility for the Good of All that is more important than our hyper-individualized notions of me... me... me.

So please remember this, as tomorrow you watch the flag parade past... the unity of this great nation, that we squander so thoughtlessly today in the name of individual rights, came at a high cost.

And the freedom to carry any weapon... at any time... by any person... is currently being paid for with the lives of our children.

And THAT seems like idolatry to me as well.

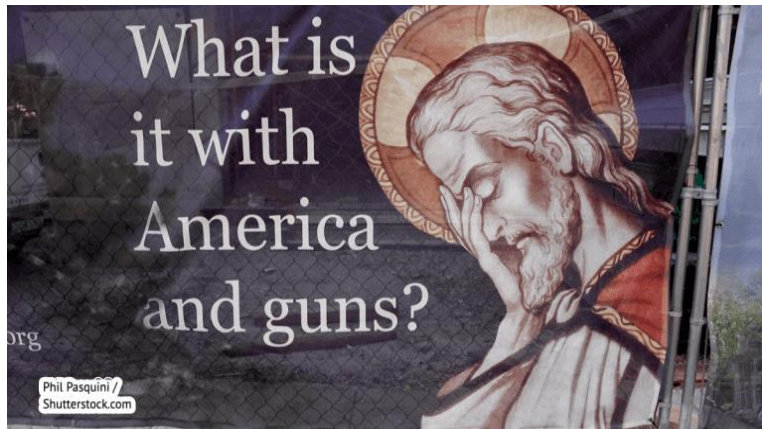






## Jesus and Guns

June 7, 2018 by [Rob Dalrymple](#)



*I kinda chuckle at the title of this blog. I know that for many guns are a big deal in America. I am not here to address the US—or any nation’s—policy regarding guns. I am not an expert on that issue and don’t ever desire to be.*

*I am, however, well equipped to address the issue of Jesus, the New Testament, and violence.*

### ***Christians are not to engage in violence***

*At the risk of giving away my conclusion at the front I will note two key points:*

- 1) Jesus demands His followers to be absolute advocates of peace.*
- 2) The people of God are not permitted to engage in retaliatory violence.*

### ***1) Jesus demands His followers to be absolute advocates of peace and the Kingdom of God***

*This one is simple. Jesus emphatically declares that it is the peacemakers who are blessed (Matthew 5:9). Perhaps a better way of explaining this point is to note that the primary mission of the people of God is to be proclaimers of the kingdom of God. Our mission is to be a light to the nations.*

*It is essential to note that the fundamental nature of the Kingdom of God is that it comes through love and not violence.*

*In addition, the kingdom of God is a kingdom of peace—a kingdom in which weapons of war will be used for agriculture and war will cease (in fulfillment of Isaiah 2:4). Now, it is without question that this kingdom has not yet come in fullness. But the point is that we are to be advocates of this kingdom. It is this kingdom that we pray will come (“Your kingdom come”; Matthew 6:10).*

*As a result, one cannot utter the Lord’s prayer and advocate for guns. This is tantamount to saying that “Jesus is Lord” (whose kingdom comes through love and suffering) but so also is Caesar (whose kingdom comes through violence).*

*No, Jesus is Lord! And though Caesar may think he is, he is not.*

*The simple conclusion then is this: if Jesus is Lord, and if His kingdom is one of peace, then we are to be advocates of a kingdom of peace. We cannot, at the same time, be advocates of guns and violence. That is how the kingdoms of the world operate. To use such means is to affirm that they have some rightful claim to power.*

### ***2) The people of God are not permitted to participate in retaliatory violence***

*The reason for making this point is simple: the primary violence in the NT is that which God’s people suffer.*

*Do they ever respond with retaliatory violence? The answer is no. Never in the book of Acts, nor in any of the letters of the NT, are the people of God recorded as participating in, or encouraged to participate in, retaliation.*

*In fact, they are particularly exhorted to not retaliate: “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.’” (Romans 12:19-20).*

*Furthermore, Jesus provides no opportunity for retaliation among His followers: “But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also” (Matthew 5:39).*

*In fact, we can take this one step further. The people of God are not only not permitted to retaliate with violence, but they must respond by giving a blessing: “To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:8-9).*

*The notion that a follower of Christ may yield a gun for retaliatory violence appears to blatantly contradict such passages and the whole tenor of the NT.*

### **Responding to objections**

#### *Buy a Sword*

*Now at this point, many cite Jesus’ command to sell your robe and buy a sword (Luke 22:36). It is very difficult to conclude that Jesus meant this literally—even though the disciples appear to take Him literally (remember the disciples are the ones who want to call fire down from heaven and destroy the Samaritans; Luke 9:54)—when the following factors are considered.*

*It is first important to note the context of Luke 22. Jesus was preparing His disciples for their ministry to the nations, which was about to begin. Jesus explains to them that their future mission will not be like the missions He had sent them out on previously (cf Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-11; Note that Luke 22:35 directly refers to the events of Luke 9 and 10).*

*While they were relatively safe in their earlier missions, their future missions will be perilous. Note the strong contrast, “but now!” in Luke 22:36. This emphasis, which is readily apparent in the Greek, is meant to heighten the disparity between the relatively peaceful efforts they experienced in the previous sendings (Luke 9, 10), with what is coming! Thus, Jesus declares, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one” (Luke 22:36).*

*That Jesus was speaking hyperbolically (exaggerating for the sake of effect) and not literally is evident first by the overwhelming testimony of the NT that demands radical non-violence and non-retaliation. For Jesus to be encouraging them to buy a sword for self-defense would contradict everything He has been saying for the past three years.*

*Secondly, just a dozen or so verses later, Peter, using one of the swords which the disciples possessed, cuts off a man’s ear. Jesus’ response is not: “I told you that you would need those.” No, Jesus rebukes them for using it, and reverses Peter’s action: “But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him” (Luke 22:51).*

*Thirdly, there is the fact that nowhere else in the NT do we find any teaching on the use of swords for self-defense. We don't see any indication of the disciples defending themselves in Acts by means of a sword. There were certainly ample opportunities for them to do so. Stephen could have used a sword in Acts 7. A sword might have been helpful to James and Peter in Acts 12. Paul could have used a sword on numerous occasions.*

*None of the letters of the NT encourage the persecuted churches to fight back, or to purchase swords. Furthermore, the people of God in the book of Revelation have only one weapon: namely, their prophetic words (Rev 11:5).*

*I did not come to bring peace*

*Others may attempt to cite Luke 10:51: "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division." The problem here is that Jesus is not suggesting that Christians are to go around seeking conflict! It is clear that in order to be peacemakers we are to avoid conflict. After all, we are to be ambassadors for the prince of peace (in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6).*

*What Jesus is indicating in this passage is that the inevitable result of the Gospel is division. Division may not be the goal, but, unfortunately, it is the result. When one family member becomes a Christian, it often results in division. That is precisely what Jesus says in the next two verses (cf Luke 10:52-53). It would be downright silly to suggest that Jesus would have us respond to this division with violence.*

### **Conclusion**

*If the fundamental expression of Christian living is to love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me (Matt 6:44), then, I ask, how could I do so with a gun holstered to my side? Does this express contradiction not end the discussion?*

*A good friend, Sami Awad, a Palestinian, non-violent, peace activist, has a sticker in his office that says, "when Jesus said, 'love your enemies,' I think He probably meant don't kill them." I think that pretty well sums it all up.*

### **About Rob Dalrymple**

*Rob Dalrymple and his wife Toni have four fabulous children, as well as 2 grandchildren! He has been teaching and pastoring for over 32 years at colleges, seminaries, and the local church. He has a PhD (Westminster Theological Seminary) in biblical interpretation. Rob is currently serving as the Executive Director of Determinetruth ministries, which is a 501c3 parachurch ministry whose vision is to provide a platform of training for pastors, leaders, and members of local churches, especially those who have been wounded by the evangelical church. Rob hosts the weekly determinetruth podcast and writes a weekly blog: all of which can be accessed at [determinetruth.com](http://determinetruth.com) He is the author of four books: *Follow the Lamb: A Guide to Reading, Understanding, and Applying the Book of Revelation* *These Brothers of Mine: A Biblical Theology of Land and Family* *Understanding the New Testament and the End Times: Why it Matters* *Revelation and the Two Witnesses*. And is presently writing a commentary for the book of Revelation (Cascade Books) titled *Revelation: A Love Story**

## The Magnificat:

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for He has looked with favor on His humble  
servant.*

*From this day all generations will call me blessed,  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is His Name.*

*He has mercy on those who fear Him  
in every generation.*

*He has shown the strength of his arm,  
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the humble.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich He has sent away empty.*

*He has come to the help of His servant Israel  
for He has remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise He made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children for ever.*

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever.*

*Amen, Alleluia.*

*The text of the canticle is taken from the [Gospel of Luke \(1:46–55\)](#) where it is spoken by [Mary](#) upon the occasion of her [Visitation](#) to her cousin [Elizabeth](#).<sup>[2]</sup> In the narrative, after Mary greets Elizabeth, who is pregnant with [John the Baptist](#), the latter moves within Elizabeth's womb. Elizabeth praises Mary for her [faith](#) (using words partially reflected in the [Hail Mary](#)), and Mary responds with what is now known as the [Magnificat](#).*



## Resources for Education and Action:

<https://bishopsagainstgunviolence.org/>

<https://www.everytown.org/>

<https://momsdemandaction.org/>

<https://studentsdemandaction.org/>

<https://wearorange.org/>

You can also find the response of the greater Episcopal Church to the shooting on May 24<sup>th</sup> here:

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ogr/resources-to-respond-to-gun-violence/?fbclid=IwARlX-mYEZ-Nt4nFe-BBY37BWGp-3TsG7YlkwCrctzb0zMyBHGMKMJ4-Ar8U>

## Scriptures Appointed for Today:

### The Collect

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

### The First Lesson - Acts 16:16-34

With Paul and Silas, we came to Philippi in Macedonia, a Roman colony, and, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

## The Psalm - Psalm 97

1 The Lord is King;  
let the earth rejoice; \*  
let the multitude of the isles be glad.

2 Clouds and darkness are round about him, \*  
righteousness and justice are the foundations of  
his throne.

3 A fire goes before him \*  
and burns up his enemies on every side.

4 His lightnings light up the world; \*  
the earth sees it and is afraid.

5 The mountains melt like wax at the presence  
of the Lord, \*  
at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

6 The heavens declare his righteousness, \*  
and all the peoples see his glory.

7 Confounded be all who worship carved images  
and delight in false gods! \*  
Bow down before him, all you gods.

8 Zion hears and is glad, and the cities of Judah  
rejoice, \*  
because of your judgments, O Lord.

9 For you are the Lord,  
most high over all the earth; \*  
you are exalted far above all gods.

10 The Lord loves those who hate evil; \*  
he preserves the lives of his saints  
and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

11 Light has sprung up for the righteous, \*  
and joyful gladness for those who are  
truehearted.

12 Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, \*  
and give thanks to his holy Name.

## **The Epistle - Revelation 22:12-14,16-17,20-21**

At the end of the visions I, John, heard these words:

"See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

"It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."  
And let everyone who hears say, "Come."  
And let everyone who is thirsty come.  
Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

## **The Gospel - John 17:20-26**

Jesus prayed for his disciples, and then he said. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

"Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

