

Light of Revival in South Texas

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By Judy Post

LA VERNIA, Texas--On Nov. 5, 2017, the sirens began to sound throughout our small community. Our neighbors began to call everyone to announce that there was a mass shooting at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas.

My husband, Terry, and I were in disbelief as we received a call that my cousin was killed while stepping in front of the shooter to save her grandson's life.

Sutherland Springs is a community of 600 people, so we knew so many who attended the small church that was built in the 1920s. The small chapel seated only about 60 people. We learned that 26 were dead, many injured and only about six survived without injury.

Origin of revivals

At the Feast of Tabernacles last fall our friend (and elder from the Houston area) George Crow gave a sermon on what would it take for the world to have a "revival" and turn people's hearts to God.

He mentioned the idea that many revivals were the result of a major disaster of historic proportions.

George's words were prophetic in this situation, not only to the people of Sutherland Springs but to me.

Reactions in community

It was inspiring to watch how the community responded to the tragedy.

After the shooting the leadership of the small church set up their small chapel as a memorial of those who died.

The week after the shooting the congregation met on a baseball field with about 2,000 in attendance.

On the following Sundays the congregation set up a large tent behind the broken chapel. Four hundred to 500 have attended ever since.

As I would go to the grocery store, I would see people praying together in the aisles. People were hugging and comforting one another throughout the town. I truly saw a revival happening before my eyes.

Shining examples

Even in this time of sorrow it was inspiring to learn more about the lives of the victims.

At my cousin Peggy Lynn's memorial the pastor opened my cousin's Bible and found in the back a piece of paper with her prayer list. The list was lengthy and it included many people.

It was not surprising that the list included every family member and every church member, but the list also noted those who called her to pray for their families, even though she didn't know them.

Peggy Lynn was a prayer warrior. People went to her when they truly needed help in their lives, whether they attended her church or somewhere else.

I realized my prayer list included only my small world. I prayed for people who were in my church and my family.

Peggy Lynn preached the gospel to me by her example.

More involved

I am thankful for the revival of this small community. I am thankful for the way it made me realize that after 50 years in "the church" I was too comfortable. I was serving only "God's called-out ones."

I am ready for a new mission in life. I'm ready to join the people in the aisles at the grocery store in prayer. I am ready to serve in the community. It is time for us to be an example to the world and to reflect the gospel wherever God leads us.

Light on a hill

A tall, strong-looking man came up to Terry and me and asked if he could help us as we approached the old First Baptist Church. Terry explained that we did not attend church there. He said with such compassion: "My friend, that does not matter. We all come from the same body."

In the Sermon on the Mount the Son of God talked about being a light on a hill.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men,

that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

It is inspiring to watch people in this community serve as a shining city on the hill of service to everyone they meet. I hope this short article encourages you to take a close look at how you view people outside your group.

The light of revival often comes from tragedy.