

Hello Lewis Lake Family,

I want to visit with you for a few moments about Charlie Kirk's murder. Last Wednesday my brothers and I had just gotten settled into our island campsite up in Voyager's National Park on Lake Namakan – and our island was about the only place on the entire lake where my phone at least occasionally got some signal, when the texts started coming in about the shooting.

I wasn't able to be with you Sunday and chat with you about this tragedy, and it wasn't until yesterday that I was really able to immerse myself just a little bit in the enormity of this cultural moment. The Vice President of the United States transported Charlie's body on Air Force Two, and yesterday he hosted Charlie's show– that tells you a little bit about the tremendous influence Charlie had.

So this is on our minds, and it's a big deal. I want to try to process this with you a little bit – and you've been processing it already, but I want to ask and answer three pretty significant questions that have been on my mind: Why does this hit us so hard? Why are so many people happy about it? and Where was God?

First, why does this hit us so hard? Charlie gave public voice to many of the things many of us hold very dear. He was an outspoken Christian, and very candid and vocal about his faith in Christ. And he applied that faith to a kind of conservative politics that many of us also readily identify with. Charlie entered the cultural battles surrounding abortion and transgenderism and other things from an informed, biblical perspective. He had a very large platform to share his ideas, and he articulated them in very powerful ways. In other words, Charlie said what we wish we could say, and to a large audience that we might wish we had. And so we saw him as this symbol of who we are and what we believe in the bottom of our hearts – and in that sense, this attack on Charlie felt like an attack on us – if someone can hate him so much as to murder him, doesn't that mean there's people who also want us dead? And that's shocking to us. It makes us anxious, makes us feel unsafe, makes us look at other people with suspicion.

Second, why are so many people happy about it? People have taken to social media to celebrate and revel in this murder. Some have desecrated his memorials, others have written songs mocking his death.

If I can say it this way, celebrating anyone's death is unchristian. But it shouldn't be terribly surprising coming from non-Christians, because it's really not that unusual. But it's hard for us. We're not only having to respond to Charlie's death, we're also having to deal with those who are celebrating his death. It's a double whammy.

One day a prominent Christian leader named Stephen was pelted with rocks until he died, there was a man standing nearby watching it all, smiling from ear to ear. He was happy about it. His name was Saul, and wanted to kill even more Christians, and did all he could to do so – until one day Jesus arrested him and completely changed his life, and used him to write half of the New Testament.

Jesus didn't only die for people who were respectable sinners or mediocre sinners. He died for the worst of the worst. He died for people who celebrated his own death, he died for the man who celebrated Stephen's death, and he died for those who currently are celebrating Charlie Kirk's death. And as Christ's representatives, we have to respond to those people like the same Jesus who loves us also loves them – enough to die for.

It's very natural and very easy to respond to wickedness in kind. It's easy to hate those who hate you and be unkind to those who are persecuting you. There's all kinds of people 'on our side' who are doing that right now. Anybody can do that, you don't need the Spirit of God to do that.

What's supernatural, what requires the power of God, is loving our enemies, and in practical terms that means we don't respond in the same way they do – we don't respond with hatred – we don't respond in such a way that we seal off any chance of ever being able to speak to them. Again, this is so easy to do. To write people off as lost causes and we don't care if we ever have any kind of relationship with them. I want to encourage you not to act this way.

Let me be really practical about this: I want your social media presence not to be one of alienation and hardening of sides, but an unexpected presence of kindness.

We are in a war – a spiritual war. But our goal isn't to defeat our human enemies, it's to convert them to our side, to set them free from our real enemy and theirs, the devil. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we demonstrate God's kindness to those who don't deserve it, and that's not just powerful, it's supernatural. I'm sure that's what Jesus meant when he said to Paul, "It's hard for you to kick against the goads." Paul's conscience had been pricked by the way the people he hated the most responded to him while he tried to destroy them.

I want your words to be goads, gently pricking your enemies' consciences until they see Christ.

Third, where was God? My Dad reminded me on Sunday of two bullets. One was fired just as a President turned to look at a chart, and because he turned his head at that moment, it clipped ear and left him largely unharmed. And I thanked God for that. I think God had something to do with that bullet.

The second bullet hit Charlie Kirk in the neck. Was God absent? Did he drop the ball, did he have a brief lapse in judgment? We have to say no. We have to say God could have made this bullet miss, but didn't. Why? I don't know. I could guess, but I'd probably be wrong. God has his reasons, and that has to be good enough.

I take great comfort in the fact that God is in control of all things at all times – even the bad ones. Now this is scary – because it means that God doesn't always protect his people from violence and death. Revelation 6 introduces us to a host of people who lost their lives for the

sake of Christ, and they're told there's many more to come. Why? Because that's how God designed the story to go.

I can't promise you a life of comfort and safety. I can promise you that whatever befalls you, God knows what he's doing, and it's all going to work out for his glory and for your good.

Charlie Kirk was a young man – just 31. And we could say he left so much undone. But by all accounts, he loved his family well, he loved his nation well, and he loved his enemies well. He lived as a man prepared to die. He loved the Lord Jesus very passionately and very publicly. No doubt he will accomplish as much in his death as in his life.

And I want to suggest that's a model for you to follow. Because you don't know what tomorrow holds for you. So love your family well. You've got problems – I want you to feel the urgency to figure those out. Husbands and wives, be aggressive about putting your marriage in a good and healthy place. Moms and Dads, be urgent about loving your kids and training them up in the Lord. And most of all, be urgent and be public about your relationship with the Lord.

To me, the greatest tragedy imaginable happens when someone dies and we wonder if they really loved Jesus – because everything about them said they didn't love Jesus nearly as much as they loved other stuff – money, fame, having a good time, whatever. When you die, let it be said of you like it's being said of Charlie Kirk – here's someone who really loved Christ, and loved him well.

That's my prayer for you. Don't let Charlie's death be wasted in your own heart. You're being forced to think about things you don't like to think about. Think about them. Think hard. Let them sink into your soul, and let them change you to be more like Christ.