

Light, darkness, and expendable children

by [James Sledge](#)

December 16, 2014

It has happened again; children slaughtered. This time it was a Taliban attack at a school in Pakistan, but it's an old, old story. It's part of everyone's least favorite Christmas-related story, Herod's killing the children of Bethlehem in an attempt to preserve his power. And terrorists and militias still use such tactics today. It's a time honored way to gain power, or to cling to it.

The powers that be in our world, from the most violent and inhumane to the most benign, are generally willing to sacrifice others to gain or maintain what they desire. The Taliban are an obscene, extreme version of this, but even in our country you can see the pattern at work. Corporations pay wages that no one can live on, and children of unskilled workers are sacrificed into poverty and hopelessness at the altar of greed and profit.

Tuesday's slaughter in Pakistan happened just days after the two-year remembrances of the killings at a school in Newtown, Connecticut. That shooting was the work of a deranged individual and not an attempt to grasp or maintain power and control. Yet our nation seems fully willing to permit such events in order to maintain a so-called right to weapons. Why on earth would we elevate a right to bear arms over the life of children? But of course that old, old story has always seen children as expendable. Even in our culture, where children are so celebrated, we still are more than willing for large numbers of them to languish in poverty, to be abused in poor foster care, or to die in order to preserve "my rights."

That this is so should be no real surprise to people of faith. At Christmas we celebrate the coming of the "light that shines in the darkness," a darkness that is very real. As Jesus himself says in John 3, "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." Faith has no illusions about the shape of the world and the evils that those who prefer darkness can do.

But faith also has hope because of the light. Jesus shows us and the world another way, a way that is not willing to sacrifice children or anyone else to maintain our good. The way of Jesus, the way of life and light, will not torture, ask another to endure poverty, value Americans over foreigners, ignore violence against minorities in the name of order and safety, or keep one group down in order that another can enjoy their bigger slice of the pie. The light of Jesus is the way of love, love even of enemies.

"That will never work," say many. It is pure foolishness, at least in the eyes of the world. That's an old, old story, too. As the Apostle Paul said nearly 2,000 years ago, "But we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

*Originally posted at [Spiritual Hiccups](#)*

*This article was edited on December 18.*