

Where Are You Aiming Today?

- Ron Stullenbarger -

Numerous reports say that Turkey has shot down a Russian plane near the Turkish-Syrian border. Russian officials deny that the plane had violated Turkish airspace. NATO is convening an emergency meeting in response.

Meanwhile, five people were shot last night (23 November) near a Black Lives Matter protest in Minneapolis. Militants attacked an Egyptian hotel early this morning, killing three. And the State Department has issued a world-wide travel alert following a month of terrorist attacks on three continents.

The alert states: *"U.S. citizens should exercise vigilance when in public places or using transportation. Be aware of immediate surroundings and avoid large crowds or crowded places. Exercise particular caution during the holiday season and at holiday festivals or events."*

In a chaotic world we have much for which to be grateful. If you are looking for reasons to be grateful, don't look outside your door. Instead, look inside your heart.

In the November 23 New York Times, David Brooks had a column on resilience. He focuses on research that highlights ways people recover from terror attacks and other traumatic experiences.

Philip A. Fisher, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon, cites unconditional love as the most important factor in nurturing resilience. Those who rebound from trauma frequently had an early caregiver *"who pumped unshakable love into them, and that built a rock of inner security they could stand on for the rest of their lives."*

The Bible is replete with examples of resilience through faith and hope. Job, responding to his trials: *"Though he slay me, I will hope in him"* (Job 13:15). Paul: *"I can do all things through him who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4:13). The persecuted apostles: *"they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name"* (Acts 5:41).

As you deal with the challenges of this chaotic world, claim your Father's unconditional love and use your trials to write a new story for your life. The more you focus on heaven, the more triumphant you will be on earth.

C. S. Lewis: *"Hope is one of the Theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in'; aim at earth and you will get neither."*

Where are you aiming today?