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December 20, 2012: No, God Has Not Called Them Home

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12/20/2012—I read the President's moving talk at the Prayer vigil at Newtown, Connecticut. He said at the end that God has called these children home. This is what happens when the Christian message deteriorates and you are left not with theology but cliché. No, God did not call these children home. He no doubt welcomed them in heaven, if there are such things, but he did not call them. These children were senselessly murdered. Because if God called them home then God willed their deaths. Did God will their deaths? President Lincoln was a theologian. I saw the movie Lincoln again last night. The movie ends with his Second Inaugural Address. In that address, Lincoln names God's will as the possible driving force behind the Civil War: Fondly do we hope--ferverently do we pray--that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether" Lincoln did not shrink from the implications of his naming God and he did not do so lightly. But President Obama did not dare say that these deaths are God's judgment for our national sin of gun madness. That would have been nothing more than a partisan misuse of God's name to score political points. But Obama also did not dare to say what might be a deeper truth. The national obsession is not just with guns, but with violence. And he almost mentioned the failure of the nation to care for its children, another aspect of America's sin of greed. All this is beside the point. Slavery was a national sin directly related to the war it brought about. Pointing to God's will for Lincoln was akin to karma. In Newtown, we see something very different: the random violence of modern life. It is not God's will. It is a world without God. God did not send that violence. Violence is what happens to man without God. Since there is no God, that is one terrifying word.