

HOPE FOR MURDERED CHILDREN

And their killers

A criminal who murders a child can be eligible for parole after 25 years in prison. If approved, he returns to the community as a free citizen.

It won't matter if he isn't healed of his illness yet, or whether his compulsion to murder young children has been subdued, or not, because his freedom is not determined by his state of mind. A child-killer can be as dangerous on the day of his release as the day he was locked up, but so long as he completes his sentence he is free.

Free, that is, to enter a community that constantly tempts him to repeat his crime.

The sight of a young child standing or playing alone, for instance, draws his thoughts to a well-worn path in his head, and there are so many easy opportunities offered to him, as well: an unwary parent, an unsupervised playground, or a trusting child strolling home alone after school. He may be free of jail but he still isn't free of his addiction, so he's a continual danger to both the community and himself.

But that's the system we're stuck with. It allows lethal people to leave jail and live among us. They haven't been rehabilitated, nor are they ready to reintegrate back into normal society, and some never will be. Some people are incorrigibly evil, and they will be until the day they die.

But the judges in such cases aren't expected to take any of this into consideration. It's their job simply to lock them away for a while and it's then up to jail staff, volunteers and a few other paid professionals to try and contain and rehabilitate these dangerous criminals before they're let loose again.

The facts, however, speak of addicted killers who cannot be rehabilitated. Given the opportunity to repeat their crime, they will. They are dangerous predators and always will be. Mercy and the milk of human kindness have no impact on them; they show no remorse, no desire to understand the impact of their crime and no response to treatment. But back into a community they will go, addicted as ever, guaranteeing more child victims, unless the community's understaffed defenses - and sheer luck - can stop them in time.

How frustrating, that after all these years we still haven't come up with a way of protecting every innocent child or a way of fully rehabilitating every dangerous criminal.

Unfortunately, our inadequacy causes both the innocent and the criminal to suffer. Many sex-offenders, for instance, can never live normal lives. They cannot control their addiction and they're treated like lepers by the community. Every move they make is viewed by a touchy public with fear and revulsion. They are stuck like caged animals in a world that would like them caged up for ever.

And the innocent children, well, their lives aren't normal, either. Their joy-filled view on life is frequently shattered by news of hideous murders, perhaps in their own neighbourhood, and they are constantly being warned by their parents to never talk to strangers. What child nowadays can wander alone without a care in the world? It's absolutely ludicrous that we think of ourselves as a civilized and advanced society when we still cannot guarantee protection for our children or healing for the addicted. .

The only thing that keeps me sane in such utter futility is the hope of a better life after this one, because this life is so brutally unfair on the innocent and so woefully inadequate in restoring the mentally ill. I hang on to the hope Jesus offered - and staked his own life to a cross as our guarantee of it - that he would personally lift us to a life beyond this one where the innocent won't ever suffer again and restoration is guaranteed for all.

I firmly believe that's what awaits murdered children, because the Bible's underlying message is about another world being formed, described in the book of Acts as "the times of restitution of all things," which God promised through Jesus Christ.

I like that phrase "all things" because it covers everything and everybody, criminals and innocent alike. If an innocent life is cut tragically short by murder in this world it's not the end of life forever, but nor is it for a life wrecked by addiction, either. Both will be restored.

Applying that same hope equally to all people, both guilty and innocent, is what keeps me going in this ridiculous world. I rest assured that one day innocent children will stand beside their killers and they will all receive the life and rehabilitation they couldn't get in this life.

I know it doesn't remove the horror of evil for the moment or the helplessness of our inadequacy, but to those who are trying so hard to protect our children and reintegrate sex-offenders into the community, it offers hope and encouragement that God will make happen later what we couldn't make happen now.