

A Real Lesson On Justice, Forgiveness, Mercy, And Grace

Last week Amber Guyer was found guilty of murdering a twenty-seven-year-old black man. Botham Jean was sitting in his apartment, eating ice cream when Amber Guyer entered the wrong apartment. Apparently, the apartments in this complex have the same layout and furniture. Amber, a police officer in Dallas stopped at the wrong floor and walked up to Jean's apartment. The door was ajar and she entered thinking someone had broken in to her apartment. Seeing Botham on the couch she pulled her gun and fired when he got up and walked toward her.

After hearing the testimony of investigators, family, neighbors, and even the defendant, they found Amber Guyer guilty of murder. A jury member said they had no choice as Amber admitted to shooting the victim while he was in his own apartment.

Up to this point one sees nothing extraordinary but a lot of grief and tragedy. An innocent black man is killed by a white police woman. His life is gone and her life will never be the same. She told the family of her grief and wishing she could undo what she had done.

But then something extraordinary did happen. The jury had a great deal of discrepancy in the sentencing of Amber Guyer. Possible prison time could range from as little as five years to as much as 99 years. Their sentence was for ten years with the possibility of parole after 5 years. This shocked most court observers but the jury acknowledged Miss Guyer's heart felt remorse and showed her compassion.

Then Botham's seventeen-year-old brother, Brandt Jean, took the stand. He openly spoke of forgiving her and even expressed regret in her

having to serve time in prison. He wanted her to know, he did not wish her to die and rot, but wanted her to give her life to Christ. Brandt then asked the judge if he could hug Amber Guyer and granted permission.

Instantly his testimony and hug went viral. Most people praised him and his family for showing such Christ life love and compassion. Some criticized him and pointed out that forgiveness was extended when a white woman killed a black man but is never shown when a black man kills a white woman.

While we might talk about the social injustice some people feel today the fact is all of us need forgiveness. I dare say, at one time or another we all do wrong, and ask for forgiveness. The Bible speaks about our need to forgive each other and our need for God's forgiveness. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15) Notice the reciprocal relationship spoken of in our passage. Our ability to be forgiven is conditioned on our ability to forgive others. Frankly, every single Christian should have knowledge of Matthew 6.14-15 and will acknowledge what I have just written. So, why is it we have trouble forgiving each other?

Forgiveness comes at a cost. Forgiveness is needed when we do wrong. In the Jean/Guyer trial, it is easy to see the wrong done and how this family has been harmed. Brandt Jean will never see his brother again and will continue to grieve over Botham's death.

Justice had to be observed. There is a reason in many crimes the one's wronged do not get to determine the punishment. Instead of justice many will seek vengeance. Botham's father expressed his disappointment in Amber Guyer's sentence but he acknowledges the

jury's duty was to hand down the punishment. "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." (Romans 12:19).

In this case mercy and grace was extended. Mercy by the jury in not giving a harsher punishment. Mercy is not getting what you deserve. Just as all of us have needed forgiveness, we have also desired mercy. We especially desire mercy from God.

Grace was shown by Brandt Jean in his desire for her to read the Bible and come to Christ. His final words to her was for her salvation. Not to be saved outside of Christ, for that is against God's will, but to be saved in Christ. If one looks up the phrase "in Christ" they will see; redemption is in Christ, Romans 3.24; God's gift of eternal life is in Christ, Romans 6.23; we are sanctified in Christ, 1 Corinthians 1.2; we are new creatures, 2 Corinthians 5.17; reconciliation is in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5.19; we are sons of God by faith in Christ, Galatians 3.26; all spiritual blessings are in Christ, Ephesians 1.3. There are many more passages relating to us being in Christ.

Let me end by making one last point. Amber Guyer received hugs from Brandt Jean and the judge. In fact, the judge handed Guyer a Bible. It is up to Amber what she does with her Bible and whether she seeks those blessings by becoming a Christian. Let us pray she does. Let us pray for those around us who also are in need for God's forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Let us also be willing to extend such forgiveness, mercy, and grace to those who sin against us. -- Dennis Tucker