

Better Than Justice, Even Better Than Mercy

by Travis Renfrow

Back in 1942 Superman was billed as the defender of “truth, justice and the American way.” But these days, America is proud to be a land of second chances. For almost anyone, almost anything is forgivable. We forgive athletes when they cheat by taking performance enhancing drugs. We forgive celebrities for their run-ins with the law. We even forgive heads of state whose indiscretions cause our entire country to blush with embarrassment. We don’t always demand justice.

I remember years ago a man closing a church service with a prayer wherein he asked God for justice for each of us. In eighteen years at home congregation, it’s the only prayer I can recall where I withheld my “Amen.” Even though I was a Christian and I felt secure in my salvation, I couldn’t ask God for justice. I knew then as I know now, justice for me means I have to pay a penalty.

I am a sinner. Romans 3:23 says, “All sin and fall short of the glory of God,” so I know that I’m included with the guilty. I also know what the penalty is for sin, because Romans 6:23 makes that plain when it says, “The wages of sin is death.” If I ask God for justice, then I ought to receive death. So I don’t pray for justice; I pray for mercy.

It’s within God’s divine right to grant or deny me mercy. But it’s God’s divine nature that wants to grant me pardon. Through the mercy of a patient God, we’re delivered from the punishment we surely deserve. But there’s more. There is grace.

If mercy is the love that spares us the punishment we deserve, grace is the gift of love that is much more than we deserve. Bible scholars ascribe several different definitions to

the word grace, but all revolve around the idea of kindness or generosity.

Though we can’t compare to God’s mercy or grace, consider this scenario: a con man has come to town and ripped off your poor grandmother. He deceived her and robbed her of every dollar she had. Then he blew it. There is nothing left. Although he’s now sorry and apologizes to your grandmother, he has no way to repay her. While you still seethe in anger, your grandmother inexplicably forgives him. In fact, she’s so moved by his sincere apology she offers to take him in and care for him indefinitely.

Not everyone would understand what your grandmother had done, but those who know grace and mercy would praise her. Now imagine this: the con man was you. Though your grandmother had been nothing but kind to you your whole life, you selfishly ripped her off. But she still loved you through it all. She still forgave you because she wanted to. She would still take you into her home and care for you. She just needed you to ask for forgiveness and to do right.

God waits for all of us to ask for forgiveness and to do right. Scriptures teach us that there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine who need no repentance (Luke 14:7.) That’s the love of God that waits for me, that waits for you, that waits for us all. If you don’t know God’s grace you don’t know what you’re missing. Let us help.



TRAVIS RENFROW

**Are you searching
for contentment?**

We can help you find the peace of mind that only comes from a relationship with God. Email us at MyWestEndChurch@gmail.com