

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

AUGUST 30

"NO GREATER LOVE - MERCY"

Scripture References

- John 18:1-11
- John 18:38-19:16
- John 19:28-30

Quick Re-Cap

What does the word "justice" mean to you? Do you like it when "justice is served"? Most of us would say yes right away, until we're the ones about to get caught! We love justice when someone else breaks a rule and gets in trouble. We get a lot less excited about justice when we're the one who broke the rule. **Justice means getting exactly what you deserve.** And the hard truth is, if we're honest about our own sin, justice doesn't sound like great news for us. The Bible says the payment for sin is death, which means being separated from God completely. The Bible also says that we have ALL sinned, and therefore deserve the eternal punishment of separation from God. Not great news. That's where the mercy of God comes in! **Mercy means not getting the punishment you deserve.** Not "getting off easy." Not "the rules don't apply to me." Mercy means the payment was real, and it was due, but someone else stepped in and took it instead of you. The night Jesus was arrested, He knew every bit of that payment was about to land on Him. He walked toward it on purpose, saying "I'm the one you're looking for." Later, a guilty criminal named Barabbas got to walk out of prison a free man for one reason only: **Jesus took his exact spot.** Barabbas didn't get what he deserved, instead he got mercy. We didn't get what we deserved either — because Jesus took it first.

Illustration

The Bible says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and that the payment for sin is death (Romans 6:23). That's terrible news for all of us, because we've all made mistakes and therefore shouldn't be able to be with Jesus forever. We're all already out of the running. There's nothing we can do to earn God's approval, but we actually don't have to. The mercy of God says that even though we have earned only separation with him, he sent Jesus to die and take that punishment we deserved. Isn't that amazing? It's so special that a perfect God loves us THAT much!

Application

This week, let's practice becoming people who step forward instead of people who stall. Because Jesus already stepped forward for us, we don't have to live scared of getting caught. We can bring our mistakes to God quickly and honestly, because **the punishment has already been dealt with.** Spend some time as a family thanking Jesus specifically for trading places with you.

Convo Starters

- Jesus prayed three times asking for another way, but still chose to go through with it. Why do you think He prayed that way if He already knew the answer?
- Pilate said Jesus was innocent and still let Him be punished. Have you ever seen someone do the "easy wrong thing" instead of the "hard right thing"? What happened?