

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 188

Dearest Grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the tragic school shooting in Sante Fe, Tx. on May 11, 2018. As I'm sure you have heard, a 17 year old suspect entered the school early in the morning with a shotgun and pistol. He than proceeded to execute 10 people and wound 10 others.

You may not remember, however, that the school in Santa Fe was in the news back in 1995. A controversy arose over praying in the name of Jesus at their high school graduation. On May 5, 1995, U.S. district judge Samuel Kent issued a ruling against students uttering the name of Jesus during prayer at graduation. He said: "And make no mistake, the court is going to have a United States marshal in attendance at the graduation." Just to make sure they got the message, Kent declared, "Anybody who violates these orders, no kidding, is going to wish that he or she had died as a child when this court gets through with it." Furthermore, the judge ruled that anyone invoking the name of Jesus at this voluntary religious service would be immediately arrested by federal marshals and jailed for a minimum of six months.

I am indebted to Jerry Necombe for these insights. In 1995 he was covering this story for the D. James Kennedy Ministries. He now notes two unusual aspects of the story.

- First, the censoring of school prayer in 1995 happened in the very school where 10 people were murdered 23 years later. You can safely assume that during this ordeal plenty of prayers were being said in the name of Jesus. To date, however, the ACLU has not filed suit.
- The second irony involves the "Honorable" Judge Kent himself. In 1995 this paragon of virtue and wisdom waxed eloquent in denouncing anyone who would defy his authority. He arrogantly declared that "anyone" praying in the name of Jesus would be arrested and sentenced to a minimum of six months in jail. He further warned he would make those who defied his orders wish they had died as a child. The irony is that on May 11, 2009 Judge Kent was himself sentenced to 33 months in Federal Prison. Amidst many allegations he finally confessed to lying to investigators about sexually molesting two female employees. He therefore has the "honor" of being the first federal judge to be sentenced for a sex crime. Kent, however, was not happy in prison. He complained that his treatment was cruel and unfair. He resented being "unjustly" labeled as a sex offender and excluded from a substance abuse treatment program. He found it was easier to "give" a sentence than to "serve" one.

While there are many lessons we can learn from this story, one obvious lesson involves the danger of judging others. Jesus warned about this by saying said that God will judge us in the same way we have judged others (Matt. 7:1, 2). The prophet Nathan, for example, told King David of a rich man who confiscated a ewe lamb from his poor neighbor to feed a traveler he was lodging. David burned with anger and vowed that the man who did such a thing deserved to die. Then Nathan told David "You are the man"! (2 Sam. 12:7). Because David was king he had the mistaken idea

that he could do anything he wanted. He was wrong! Even powerful people like judges and kings still have to obey the laws of God.

Jesus taught - “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matt. 5:7). The way to receive mercy is therefore to give it. James emphasizes this same point by stating “Judgement without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful” (Ja. 2:13). After describing the punishment of an unforgiving servant Jesus warned: “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (Matt. 18:21 - 35).

Jesus, as you know, was criticized for eating in the home of a tax collector and sinner like Matthew. In response to this criticism Jesus challenged His accusers to “Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt. 9:9 - 12).

Perhaps that is a lesson that Judge Kent and everyone else also needs to learn!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce