

## *Pk's Perspectives ... Catching Stones*

*I just finished reading a book titled "Just Mercy" by Bryan Stevenson. It is definitely a good read...very thought provoking and even unsettling as the author knits real life stories with personal insights on the topic of social justice. Mr. Stevenson is a Harvard trained lawyer who has invested his life in giving voice to wrongfully incarcerated inmates, primarily in the prisons of Georgia and Alabama. He has worked on behalf of UDS (Under Death Sentence) inmates who were wrongfully convicted and also on behalf of life-sentence inmates guilty of non-violent crimes. Mr. Stevenson's work has been instrumental in changing sentencing laws related to juveniles and mentally handicapped individuals in the legal system. If you're willing to reflect honestly on some difficult issues, I recommend this book for your perusal.*

*Mr. Stevenson is well educated and well spoken. He is also a follower of Jesus Christ. While reading his book, I appreciated the examples of his faith informing his experiences and also the times when Mr. Stevenson's experience shaped his faith. I want to share a passage from the book. First, some context. The author has encountered a woman, a stranger, on the steps of a courthouse in New Orleans, just after winning two challenging cases. A conversation ensues, a part of which I'm sharing in the following excerpt:*

*(The woman speaking)* "I grieved and grieved and grieved. I asked the Lord why he let someone take my child like that. He was killed by some other boys. I came to this courtroom for the first time for their trials and sat in there and cried every day for nearly two weeks. None of it made any sense. Those boys were found guilty for killing my grandson, and the judge sent them away to prison forever. I thought it would make me feel better but it actually made me feel worse...All these young children being sent to prison forever, all this grief and violence. Those judges throwing people away like they're not even human, people shooting each other, hurting each other like they don't care. I don't know, it's a lot of pain. I decided that I was supposed to be here to catch some of the stones people cast at each other."

*(The author responding)* "I chuckled when she said it. During the McMillian hearings, a local minister had held a regional church meeting about the case and had asked me to come speak. There were a few people in the African American community whose support of Walter was muted, not because they thought he was guilty but because he had had an extramarital affair and wasn't active in the church. At the church meeting, I spoke mostly about Walter's case, but I also reminded people that when the woman accused of adultery was brought to Jesus, he told the accusers who wanted to stone her to death, 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.' The woman's accusers retreated, and Jesus forgave and urged her to sin no more. But today, our self-righteousness, our fear, and our anger have caused even the Christians to hurl stones at the people who fall down, even when we know we should forgive or show compassion. I told the congregation that we can't simply watch that happen. I told them we have to be stonecatchers. She took my hands and rubbed my palms. 'Well, it hurts to catch all them stones people throw.'"

I like that thought: "We have to be stonecatchers." We need to be about protecting, helping, and healing broken humanity while sheltering the poor, oppressed and down trodden from the stones of judgment and condemnation being hurled by a calloused society. And yes, it hurts to catch all them stones people throw...kind of like the cross of Christ. Cya in Sunday School & Worship, PK.