

Justice, Judgmentalism and the Casey Anthony Verdict

Her

“not guilty” verdict made a lot of people mad. But before we vent any more anger we may need an attitude check.

Where

were you on July 5 when the Casey Anthony verdict was released? Just before the 2:15 p.m. announcement, I was in a restaurant in Orlando with my family—and our waitress was so anxious to hear the outcome of the trial that she brought up the topic after we ordered our lunch. Not since the 1995 O.J. Simpson trial have Americans invested so much emotional energy in a courtroom drama.

Because

I live near Orlando where the trial was held, I’ve grown weary of the never-ending local news coverage, which included stories on how much Casey was allowed to spend on toiletries every week at the Orange County jail and how long out-of-town visitors waited in line to get tickets to the trial. I remember when 2-year-old Caylee Anthony went missing in 2008. I remember when her decomposed remains were found six months later in some woods near her home. I listened to the blur of reports about duct tape, the suspicious odor in the trunk of the car, the chloroform, and her mother’s partying

habits.

“Before you spend any more time analyzing the evidence, complaining about the jury or judging Casey’s motives, ask God to touch her. Could God have actually been involved in this unexpected verdict to give Casey more time to discover Him?”

People became engrossed in the case of the so-called Tot Mom. Many became armchair prosecutors. Some of them flew to Orlando to get a seat in the courtroom. Millions more followed every detail of the trial through *Nancy Grace*, *Dateline* and other news programs. Many amateur crime solvers were convinced Casey killed her little daughter—and they were ready to hand her a death sentence.

After the verdict was read on Tuesday, many Americans were shocked—mostly because Casey’s lies during the lengthy ordeal destroyed her credibility. Thousands of angry Twitterers formed a virtual lynch mob. Their words were harsh, exemplified by these tweets from people who referenced God:

- “The jury may have found her ‘not guilty,’ but she’ll get what’s coming to her. God will make sure of that!”
- “Casey, you didn’t win. You have a dead daughter, a guilty conscience, a society that hates you and a date with God.”

- “Dear Casey Anthony, God will deal with you. Good luck finding a lawyer that will help you lie to Him.”

Maybe I’m in the minority, but it disturbs me when I hear Christians spewing vindictive statements about God’s judgment in anybody’s direction—especially toward a woman who has just been pronounced not guilty in an American courtroom. Yes, I feel horrible for little Caylee, whose life was stolen from her. Yes, I think Casey’s story seemed to be full of holes. And no, I don’t believe the not guilty verdict brought the kind of “closure” Casey’s parents claim to have now. We’re not any closer to solving the mystery of her death.

But in the end, people who follow Christ should not be grabbing pitchforks and demanding vigilante justice just because a trial didn’t turn out the way we thought it should. Our response should be tempered with redemption. I’d recommend the following:

Thank God for

His mercy toward you. Every one of us deserves a guilty verdict from God because of our sins (see Romans 3:23), but in His perfect love He engineered a way to satisfy justice and yet grant us full pardon. If you truly know the forgiveness of Christ, you cannot cold-heartedly desire revenge for others. Our attitude should be guided by Ephesians 4:32 (NASB): “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

Pray for

Casey Anthony and her family. Before you spend any more time analyzing the evidence, complaining about the jury or judging Casey's motives,

ask God to touch her. Do you believe He loves her? Could God have actually been

involved in this unexpected verdict to give Casey more time to discover Him?

Pray that Casey and her parents will come to know His salvation in a personal way.

(P.S. This whole thing has reminded me that I've not spent too much time

praying for O.J. Simpson, either.)

Pray for the children who are abused

every day and don't get news coverage. According to the organization Child Help, a report of

child abuse is made every 10 seconds. Almost five children

die every day in the United States as a result of child abuse, and more

than three out of four are like Caylee Anthony—under the age of 4.

If

Christians become more aggressive in addressing child abuse in all its

forms—and channel our righteous anger in a positive direction—Caylee's death

will not have been in vain.

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