

The sentence

A drama about Christ's sacrifice and our forgiveness
Romans 5:6-9

Characters
Judge
Clerk of the court
Accused (Acc)

Scene: A court room. A large chair is central. The accused is slightly to the side in something representing the dock.

(The clerk enters)

Clerk: All rise for his honourableness The Judge. Mr Justice Willerby Dunn.

(Judge enters and takes his seat)

Judge: Silence in court! Silence in court! The court is now in session. (Looks at clerk)
So what do you have for me this morning clerk?

Clerk: This morning your honour you have the privilege of sentencing this little vagabond in the dock!

Judge: Oh really. Well this should be fun. What has he done?

Clerk: Well your honour, he was found guilty last month of stealing 6 doughnuts from Doughnut Heaven on the High street. He has been held in custody awaiting your sentence since then.

Judge: Six doughnuts eh? And from Doughnut Heaven! Well they do make the very best doughnuts. I often get one when I'm out at lunchtime.

Acc: But it wasn't me guv. Honestly, it wasn't me.

Judge: Wasn't you young lad! Wasn't you! Why, I remember the evidence clearly. Mr Tubby from Doughnut Heaven turned around to find six doughnuts missing. He called for PC Nabbem who was on duty outside his shop and he found you just around the corner with doughnut jam on your face and half a Doughnut Heaven doughnut in your hand.

Acc: But it wasn't me your honour. I was telling the truth when I told you that someone gave me that doughnut. I didn't steal it!

Judge: Look here laddie, the evidence was overwhelming. You stole those doughnuts and a jury found you guilty. It's no use protesting your innocence. You are guilty and that is that.

Acc: But how could I have eaten five and a half doughnuts in 2 minutes?

Judge: Easily! My record is 10!

Acc: But....

Judge: But nothing! It's your own fault you are here. If you had pleaded guilty and offered to pay for the doughnuts in the first place PC Nabbem would probably have just given you a good telling off and sent you home, but, because you've tried to worm your way out of this for so long, you now face a substantial sentence. And it's all your fault!

Acc: But what about my poor Ma?

Judge: Your poor Ma? What about your poor Ma? What's she got to do with this? Was she involved as well? Was she your look out? Or did she eat some of the doughnuts? I think I might send PC Nabbem round to see her right now.

Acc: Oh no your honour. No not my Ma. No she'd never do anything bad like this.

Judge: But why did you mention her then? Are you sure she wasn't involved in this? Maybe you're innocent after all. Maybe it was your 'poor ma' all along!

Acc: No! No! O I admit it. It was me! I stole the doughnuts. I'm guilty, so sentence me and get it over with.

Judge: At last! At last! Honesty is always the best policy. So then, what should the sentence be? (pauses to think) Clerk, have you got any suggestions?

Clerk: Well your honour, last week you sentenced a man who stole a bicycle to 30 years hard labour, and the week before you sentenced that woman who had dropped litter to life imprisonment.

Judge: Well I have to say that this crime is far more serious than stealing a bicycle or dropping litter, much more serious. You know when I went out at lunchtime that day to get my doughnut from doughnut Heaven there were none left. None! And it was all his fault No, this is much more serious, so what should the sentence be?

Clerk: Well the lions at the zoo are always hungry.

Acc: No!

Clerk: Or how about deportation? You could send him some where a long long way away where he will never see his 'poor Ma' again!

Acc: No! Please, no! My poor MA couldn't stand it. It would kill her!

Judge: Umm... You know this is a difficult case. Those doughnuts from Doughnut Heaven are the very best, there's nothing like them! I think if I didn't have any money I might be tempted to steal a few myself. And what about his poor MA? He obviously loves her very much. It wouldn't be fair on her to send him away or lock him up would it. And look at him! He's a skinny little runt! He's only a boy and we all make mistakes don't we.

Clerk: But he's a criminal! He deserves his sentence.

Judge: You're right, he does. I must pass a proper sentence for such a serious crime. After all it wasn't just one doughnut, it was 6! Umm.... (thinks). (Jumping up from chair) I've got it! I've got it! (Looks seriously at accused) Prisoner in the dock, you have been found guilty of a terrible crime. Stealing six doughnuts from Doughnut Heaven. This crime can only carry the toughest sentence, so I order that you be taken from this place and locked up in the town gaol for a period of sixty years. 10 years for each doughnut you stole!

Acc: NO! No! Please no! I'll be 73 when I get out!

Judge: *But I have also decided that I will take your place and serve your sentence for you and let you go free!*

Acc: *Pardon?*

Clerk: *What?*

Judge: *I said, I have also decided that I will take your place and serve your sentence for you and let you go free!*

Acc: *Do you mean it?*

Clerk: *Have you gone mad?*

Judge: *No, I haven't gone mad, and yes, I do mean it. You can go free – back to your poor Ma – and I will go to prison for you. Just one thing though laddie.*

Acc: *Err, what's that your honour?*

Judge: Maybe you could visit me once a year and bring me a doughnut from Doughnut Heaven? But be careful you buy it won't you.

Acc: Well, yes your honour. Of course I will your honour. Every year your honour. Thank you your honour.

Judge: (calling off stage) PC Nabbem! Take me away to the cells and let this little lad go free.

(Judge exits)

Clerk: (looking at accused) Well, what are you waiting for?

Acc: Err...

Clerk: Clear off! Get out of here! He's gone completely mad, but you are free!

(They both exit)