

## **Amish Forgiveness**

by

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I am haunted and it has nothing to do with the Halloween season. I am haunted by the words of 13 year old Marian Fisher who asked her captor to shoot her first in a bid to save the other girls in a horrific classroom scene that defies description. I am haunted because this incredibly courageous Amish girl has made me feel woefully inadequate about my faith. Marian Fisher is a whole lot more than an American hero. She is an inspiration to those of us who believe in something bigger than ourselves.

As if Marian's example weren't overwhelming enough, her sister Barbie asked that she be shot next. I don't know what they were teaching in that Amish school but I do now hope that my children are taught the same way in their school.

Marian Fisher and the Amish have taught me many lessons over this last week. They have turned me inside out and made me examine what exactly it is that I proclaim to be. They have made me reevaluate my self-righteous indignation at those who have done me wrong. They have made me ask the tough questions inside myself from the death penalty to the war on terror.

Perhaps it was apropos that the Amish belief system would not permit anyone to be interviewed on camera by the media horde. Their profound actions said it all. We learned of their remarkable response as word trickled out of their community through intermediaries. Not only did the Amish immediately forgive a brutal murderer of a seemingly unforgivable act, they reached out to his family. It was even reported that half the people attending his funeral were Amish.

The power of forgiveness that the Amish have shown is something that will stay with me forever. Instead of holding up John 3:16 signs or preaching at us, these extraordinary people have gently gone about their business in our frantic culture, living what they believe Jesus was all about. In the midst of their world being turned upside down by inexplicable evil, they didn't just talk about forgiveness. They didn't just believe in forgiveness. They lived forgiveness. And their forgiveness was not just forgiveness about the little things or even the bigger things. Their forgiveness included all things, including the unimaginable things. But most powerful of all, they did it without words.

In the coming weeks, we will likely hear more about why a nice, quiet milkman with a family and no criminal history went berserk and committed such a heinous act. The experts will come out with theories explaining how this could somehow happen. But I already have my own theory regardless of pre-existing factors uncovered. My theory is evil personified. Evil found a lost and empty soul to inhabit and use. But evil's twisted scheme failed when it encountered Marian Fisher. Marian had a power greater than any

supernatural evil. The only grip evil could hold against her was death. But a belief of God's everlasting love was more real to Marian than the gun in her face.

You don't need to believe in a deity to be in awe of Marian Fisher. Something inside us just naturally resonates that this was an amazing person. Likewise, you don't need to believe in something supernatural to be repulsed by the sick actions of anyone who would murder innocent people for some wicked cause. Something inside our human nature just naturally speaks to us.

While I have always admired the Amish from a distance for their lifestyle and their beliefs, I now think I need to get a little closer. And perhaps their quiet example has a message applicable to our "Christian" nation. Their selfless actions are the antithesis of terrorism. When confronted with the aftermath of a killer who took away what was most precious to them, the Amish responded with concern and forgiveness to his family. It's unfathomable to most of us, even those of us who believe in something bigger than ourselves, even those of us who believe in a forgiving God. But something inside of me keeps reverberating that the Amish have got it right.



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