



**Grain** “You took something very precious away from me. I will never talk to her ever again. I will never be able to hold her again. But I forgive you. And have mercy on your soul.” — Nadine Collier, daughter of Ethel Lance

### Field

“51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; 53 but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. 54 When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, ‘Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?’ 55 But he turned and rebuked them. Luke 9:51-55

### Thoughts

At first, it seemed odd feeling hopeful while walking out of the movie, *Emanuel*. After all, it was a documentary about the Emanuel Nine, Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Clementa Pinckney, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, and Myra Thompson, executed by a young man steeped in white supremacy. But I found others who watched the movie feeling similarly - profoundly sad but hopeful as though the epitome of our Christian faith had just been actualized on screen. Was this a documentary about grace meeting evil? So often our actions are catching up to our ideals. Who were these family members who could forgive the murderer for stealing away their beautiful loved ones?

Not everyone was forgiving and some resented those who were. Would forgiveness impede the sort of justified anger needed to unearth racism, not only the kind that is blatant but that is so much a part of the fabric of our society? As a believer in prophetic anger and acknowledging plain old ire that is part of being human, not immediately forgiving people makes sense. Also, twisted notions of forgiveness too often have been used to condone abuse or to not address it. But it seemed there was something other worldly that brought love and forgiveness into the spotlight more immediately than many of us would have expected in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. One of several examples of that was in the person of Chris Singleton, the teenage son of Sharonda Coleman-Singleton. He was a baseball player who had followed the example of a team mate by writing a Biblical passage (Chris’ was about facing adversity) on his arm. He hoped it would help him to win. Not long after that his mother was executed. Chris recognized then that the passage wasn’t for baseball but for facing his mother’s death. As the family members were given a chance to speak to the murderer on screen within a couple of days of the trial, Chris’ turn came up. “I forgive you,” he said. In the movie he talked about being surprised by his own words and that it didn’t even seem like it was him speaking.

When Jesus turned his face to Jerusalem, he taught about and faced a new way of life, a way we would need help with from God to live. Should we bring fire on those who are not like us and who don’t welcome us? No. Jesus would later even forgive his executors. Love is often not easy, but grace sometimes is embodied in ways that amaze and challenge us to the core of our faith. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy