
Justice And Mercy In The Merchant Of Venice

Shakespeare has captured the attention of the world creating his new words and developing characteristics in characters relationships that are still seen in the 21st century. His personal views on justice and mercy are implicitly and explicitly shown through characters and their relationships. The Merchant of Venice; one of Shakespeare's most famous articles of work has many examples of justice and mercy throughout. One of the most prominent issues in William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, is the balance between justice and mercy. The occurrence of justice and mercy shown throughout the supporting and lead characters is shown in several forms and is a predominant theme. Not only was justice and mercy a protuberant issue in the 1600's venetian era but it is also very much a prominent problem in the 20th century.

Mercy is the act of treating a person compassionately and justly even if they have done something wrong by you. Mercy is very hard to give as it takes extreme resilience and forgiveness to reflect it upon someone else.

The first most prominent example of mercy in the play is shown when Launcelot asks his father Gobbo who is blind for forgiveness. Launcelot his son, takes his father's ailment to his advantage misleads his father after seeing him in the street. He gives him wrong directions to his house and then later tries to convince him that he is dead. Gobbo being blind does not exactly know who is speaking to him which is why he was easily fooled. As can be imagined this causes Gobbo some torment which Launcelot immediately sees. Launcelot bends down to his hands and knees and utters, "Give me your blessings..." (Shakespeare 82). This shows a certain courage and resiliency from Launcelot to confess his wrongdoing. Gobbo shows mercy to his seemingly foolish son by restoring there undoubtedly tightknit and loving relationship as father's and son's do. He shows this by helping Launcelot to get a job working for Bassanio.

Although The Merchant of Venice is only a play it's morals are very much true to the real world. The concept of mercy has not changed from 400 years ago. Mercy is pleaded for in court cases where the worst are being heard, when people are being terrorised in terror attacks, when lives are at stake and yet the worst of the worst show the slightest of mercy no matter how psychotic they are. Mercy is not just an action, but it is a part of human nature.

Mercy is closely tied in with justice especially in the context of the modern-day legal system. Justice can seem quite unfair at times especially in Act 1: Scene 2 where Portia is locked by a sense of justice in the form of a rule. Before Portia's father had died, he set out a rule that she could strictly only marry a man that could pick the right casket. Although her father is dead, she cannot disobey his ruling. Not only can she not have choice in who she marries but anyone that does take the test and fails may not marry her for the rest of their life.

The most incontestable example of justice within The Merchant of Venice is one of the most fascinating scenes out all of William Shakespeare's greatest works. As this scene unfolds, we become engrossed in the plot where the sly and cunning Shlock demands his own form of a cruel justice; he requests that if Antonio does not pay his loan back, he may cut off one pound of his flesh. This unquestionably is one of the more extreme cases of obtaining justice. Shylock

does not accept a plea of mercy from Antonio. An explicit statement of this from Act 4: Scene 1 is, "(Shylock is) incapable of pity, void and empty from any dram of mercy," which explains Shylocks negative determination towards Antonio. Shylock becomes so set in his ways that he shows no leniency to be merciful. This isn't any different to the 21st century.

Many people become fixated on bringing others to their full justice and don't think about showing mercy. Justice is not always negative it can bring a sense of relief to families and community's especially when people have died at the hands of others.

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