

I Called It Mercy

Gospel dark country · character ballad

Jaxson Harlan & Savannah Grayce

Key: E minor (concert) · Time: 6/8 · ♩ = 68 (or slow 4/4 at 66–70)

Capo: none · Capo 2 for F# minor if Savannah needs lift · Feel: dragged, spare, do not rush the story

Worship Team Direction

This is not a congregational praise chorus. Treat it like a short play with two witnesses. Savannah sings in the first person as Aimee — not as a cartoon villain, and not as a woman we claim to have judged into heaven or hell. Jaxson is not the prosecutor. He is the God-who-sees voice: gravel, Scripture, the empty plate. The band should leave air around both of them.

Form

Intro (spoken) – V1 – Pre – Chorus – V2 – Pre – Chorus – V3 – Bridge – Final Chorus – Tag – Outro hold.

Radio edit, if needed: drop Verse 2 and its pre-chorus. Verse 2 is the teaching verse (scarcity fear, comparison, the barn). Keep it when the song sits with the website message.

Vocals

- Savannah / Aimee: Verses 1–2 almost tender. Let the lie live in the sweetness. Do not wink at the crime. Verse 3 loses polish — less air, more bone, as if the room got smaller. The last tag is confession, not a big note. Stay conversational until the bridge.
- Jaxson: Always a little behind the beat. Low chest, worn. Chorus is proclamation, not scolding. On “You called it mercy, child / He called it by its name,” drop intensity rather than climb. The door closes quietly.
- Bridge: strict call and answer. Do not overlap the first four lines. Stack only on “And the years that man can measure.”
- Final chorus: Jaxson takes the first six lines alone; Savannah joins at “You called it mercy.” Then she is alone for “If You’re the God who sees the hungry.” Jaxson closes the last four lines of the tag, almost spoken.
- No choir until the last refrain, and even then only two or three voices under the final “He called it by its name,” then out. Do not resolve the song with a Sunday-morning stack.

Band map

- Acoustic guitar (lead sheet instrument): Travis or slow 6/8 roll. Verses mostly thumb-bass on E and G with light fingers. Do not fill every hole.
- Second acoustic or mando: enter at Verse 2, high and thin. Out for Verse 3.
- Upright or very round electric bass: roots only in Verse 1. Add fifths at the first chorus. Walk only in the last two bars of each pre-chorus into the chorus.
- Piano or pump organ: held whole notes, left hand spare. Think chapel, not pad bed. Organ can take the intro under the spoken lines.
- Pedal steel: treat it like weather. Swells on the chorus downbeats and on “empty plate in the evening.” No country licks in the verses.
- Brushes or cajon: in at first chorus, out for Verse 3, back for the bridge. If you use a kit, keep the snare off the verses entirely.
- Fiddle (optional): one long line under the final tag only. Do not solo.

Dynamics and cuts

- Intro / V1: guitar + organ + vocal. Almost nothing else.
- First chorus: add bass and brushes. Still lean.
- V2: second guitar in. Build without getting pretty.
- V3: strip to guitar and voice. Bass can hold a low E only.
- Bridge: band finds a pulse again, but leave space between the call and the answer.
- Tag: Savannah nearly dry. Jaxson’s last four lines over a held Em. Steel answers once, then silence. Do not land on a G major smile.

Theological guardrail for the platform

The five hundred months belong to man's court. Do not sing them as gloating. The roster, the plate, and the knock that is not a jailer belong to God. Leave the last tag unresolved on purpose. We do not announce the end of her soul. We put the listener in the same dock.

Guitar Vocabulary

Open chords, concert pitch. If Savannah needs the song higher, capo 2 and play these same shapes (sounding F# minor). If Jaxson needs it lower, drop the whole form to D minor (capo none, rewrite Em→Dm, C→Bb, G→F, D→C, Am→Gm, B7→A7) — only if the steel player is warned.

Em 022000 C x32010 G 320003 D xx0232 Am x02210 B7 x21202

Nashville numbers in E minor: i = Em bVI = C bIII = G bVII = D iv = Am V7 = B7

Verse loop: $i - bVI - bIII - bVII$ Pre-chorus: $iv - i - bVI - bVII$ Chorus lift: $bVI - bIII - bVII - i$

Strum / roll

6/8 feel, counted 1-a 2-a 3-a | 2-a 2-a 3-a. Thumb plays the root on 1 and 4. Light brush on 3 and 6 in the choruses only. Verses can be rolled: bass – inner – high – inner. Mute the G string a little so it does not ring like a camp song.

Suggested intro figure (let ring):

e	0	0	3	2
B	0	1	0	3
G	0	0	0	2
D	2	2	0	0
A	2	3	2	
E	0	3	0	3

That is Em to C with a passing G bass, then G to D. Play it twice under Jaxson's spoken intro.

Chord Chart

INTRO — Jaxson, almost spoken over the figure | Em | C | G | D | x2

Em Where others saw a crisis

G She saw the river rise **D**

Em Man can count the months he gives you **C**

G **D**
He cannot count the lie

VERSE 1 — Savannah (as Aimee)

Em C
The cafeterias locked their doors

G **D**
The streets went thin and mean

Em They said the little ones still gotta eat

G **D**
I hung a holy name between

Em C
I wore compassion like a coat

G **D**
I learned the forms by heart

Em **C**
A hungry child is easy ink
G **D**
If no one pulls the sheet apart

PRE-CHORUS — Savannah

Am **Em**
I told my hands, this ain't a theft
C **D**
This is a door God left
Am **Em**
I signed the mercy, sent it west
C **D** **Em**
And kept a little for the rest

CHORUS — Jaxson

C **G**
There's a God who sees the roster
D **Em**
There's a God who counts the plate
C **G**
You can serve a hundred years of man
D **Em**
And still not settle that weight
Am **Em**
He don't need a courthouse window
C **G**
He don't wait on a judge's pen
D **B7**
You called it mercy, child
C **D** **Em**
He called it by its name

Turnaround into verses: | C | D | Em | Em | After last chorus go straight to the tag.

VERSE 2 — Savannah

Em **C**
I wasn't born a thief at dawn
G **D**
I was born afraid of empty
Em **C**
Comparison is a quiet fire
G **D**
It makes a palace out of plenty
Em **C**
I watched the ones who had it all
G **D**
I preached a barn into the dark
Em **C**
If I don't take it, it runs out
G **D**
That's the gospel I learned by heart

PRE-CHORUS — Savannah (same changes)

Am **Em**
I wrote down mouths that never ate
C **D**
I made the numbers pray
Am **Em**
If Heaven keeps a kitchen list
C **D** **Em**
I hoped He'd look the other way

CHORUS — Jaxson (same changes; add brushes and bass)

VERSE 3 — Savannah, thinner, closer to the mic band down to guitar + low E

Em **C**
They gave me months like railroad ties
G **D**
Laid end to end I cannot see home
Em **C**
Five hundred shadows on a painted wall
G **D**
And still I take my supper alone
Em **C**
I paid a debt to Minnesota
G **D**
I paid the kind the papers love
Em **C**
But there's a knock that ain't a jailer
G **D**
Comin' down from above

BRIDGE — call and answer do not overlap the first four lines

Am **Em**
Savannah: I saw the money
Jaxson: He saw the child
C **G**
Savannah: I saw a future
Jaxson: He saw the lie
Am **Em**
Savannah: I saw a life that finally looked like winning
C **G**
Jaxson: He saw an empty plate in the evening
D **B7**
Both: And the years that man can measure
C **G**
Have a finish and a door
D **B7**
But the One who required the rich man's soul
C **D** **Em**
Still walks the jailhouse floor

FINAL CHORUS — Jaxson; Savannah joins at “You called it mercy”

C **G**
 There's a God who sees the roster

D **Em**
 There's a God who counts the plate

C **G**
 You can serve a hundred years of man

D **Em**
 And still not settle that weight

Am **Em**
 He don't need a courthouse window

C **G**
 He don't wait on a judge's pen

D **B7**
 You called it mercy, child

C **D** **Em**
 He called it by its name

TAG — Savannah alone, almost breaking

Em **C**
 If You're the God who sees the hungry

G **D**
 Then You see this beggar too

Em **C**
 I got no meal to set before You

G **D** **Em**
 Only the truth

TAG — Jaxson, low, last word hold the final Em

C **G**
 Ask for the mercy

D **Em**
 You never made

C **G**
 Ask for the mercy

D **Em**
 That don't get paid

OUTRO

| C | D | Em (hold, let the steel answer once, then cut to silence)

Cue Sheet for the Board

- Spoken intro: vocal up, guitar figure under, no verb on Jaxson.
- Verse 1: Savannah slightly dry. Delay only.
- Chorus 1: add a short plate-reverb on Jaxson, not a hall.
- Verse 3: pull everything 3–4 dB. Leave the mouth noise. That is the cell.
- Bridge answers: Jaxson a touch more present than Savannah so the judgment line reads.
- Final tag: pull the band, leave one guitar and the room. Do not swell the last “paid.” Fade or hard cut on the Em ring.

Jaxson Harlan · I Called It Mercy · for ministry use with the Part One teaching on greed