

Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

The parable in today's Gospel deals with one of the most fundamental truths of the spiritual life: if we do not forgive one another their trespasses then God will not forgive us our trespasses.

The parable is short and to the point. A man owed his master, 10,000 talents, and on bended knee begged for his master's patience, promising to repay all that is owed. And his master, moved with compassion, not only was patient with him, but even forgave him the entire debt.

Then this very same man went out and threw one of his own servants, who owed him a very small, almost insignificant amount of money, into prison, even after his servant fell at his feet begging for patience using the exact same words that the man himself had just uttered.

When the master found out what happened, he became angry, reproved the man, and delivered the man to the torturers, holding him accountable for his entire debt.

The Lord offers us many opportunities in our lives to keep His commandments, both personally and as a community. Opportunities to live our life as He Himself lives His life. Opportunities to acquire the Holy Spirit and become Christ-like, to become God-like, to forsake the ways of the fallen world and to partake of eternal and divine life.

In fact, one could rightly say that with the incarnation of the Son of God each and every moment of our lives becomes an opportunity to take hold of divine life. Christ Himself says, that He has come not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly.

But the Lord knows that opportunities by themselves are not enough. We also need spiritual instruction and divine guidance. For without His divine teaching, we will meet these opportunities in a worldly rather than godly way, and we will find ourselves living according to the realities of this world outside the realm of divine life, outside the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, the Lord gives us commandments. Commandments which are called "life-bearing" because through them we can partake of His eternal life. The Lord says, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." That is, if you want to partake of My life, then learn and keep My ways.

In the Old Testament, the Lord spoke to Israel through the prophet Isaiah telling His people that His ways are very different from their ways. He said, "My thoughts are not

your thoughts, nor your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

In today’s parable we see very clearly both the height of the Lord’s ways, and the depravity of the ways of the world. We see a sharp contrast, a black and white, night and day comparison, between the ways of God and the ways of men.

In the character of the master we see the Lord’s merciful forgiveness. A forgiveness which knows no bounds, a forgiveness which goes beyond our expectations, for the master forgave his servant the entire debt even though his servant was only asking for patience and was willing to try and make recompense.

Of course, this same thing happens with us, for the moment we approach the Lord on bended knee, promising to make amends for our sins, He immediately receives us back, forgiving us all our sins and erasing all our debt.

In the character of the master’s servant we see a man bound by the realities of this world, a man unwilling to adopt the ways of God. A man unwilling to deal with others in the manner God has dealt with Him.

When we think about it, how patient is the Lord with us? How often has He forgiven our sins? How often has He wiped our slate clean? Yet, how many times do we demand that others make restitution to us for their hurtful words, insensitive ways, or for simply rubbing us the wrong way? We are so quick to think, so and so needs to apologize to me, it is the just thing to do. Well, yes, it may be the just thing to do, but in a worldly sense.

We can see the same in the parable: the man was absolutely in the right to demand that his servant pay him what he owed. Yet, in the face of divine love, in the face of God’s boundless forgiveness, everything changes. When someone receives the gift of divine love and mercy, he receives not only the forgiveness of his own debts, but he receives the responsibility to forgive the debts of others. When we become a Christian, an adopted son of God, we are expected to act like one.

In the “Our Father” we pray that our trespasses be forgiven us, as we forgive those who trespass against us. In so doing we not only acknowledge that God will deal with us, as we deal with each other, but we even ask Him to do so. We ask Him to show us the mercy, compassion, and patience that we show each other.

Yet, how often do we want the “best of both worlds”? How often do we want to be forgiven by God, and at the same time require full restitution from our neighbor. How often do we want to be partakers of divine life, while at the same time following the ways of the world?

Brothers and Sisters, we cannot expect to enter the Kingdom of God if we don’t adopt His ways. So let us not be like the man in today’s parable. Let us neither forget, nor be unwilling to imitate the ways of our Heavenly Master. Because if we don’t follow His life-bearing commandments, we will undoubtedly find ourselves not only subject to the

torments of our own conscience, but also outside His Kingdom, outside the realm of divine life.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.