

The Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 18:23-35
November 5th, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Have Patience with Me

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.’ And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty God, we thank Thee that for Thy Son’s sake Thou hast forgiven us all our debt and graciously delivered us from the everlasting prison-house, and we beseech Thee, by Thy Holy Spirit preserve our hearts from ingratitude and wickedness, that we may not again provoke Thine anger against us, but gladly forgive our debtors, and at all times be assured of Thy fatherly mercy; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dearly beloved, the parable of the unmerciful servant which we hear today is prompted in the Scriptures by St. Peter’s question of our Lord + Jesus. In the two verses preceding our text today from the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew, St. Peter asks our Lord “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?” St. Peter offers what he clearly sees as a generous amount: “until seven times?” Our Lord + Jesus corrects St. Peter by showing him that he needs to be even more merciful. Our Lord tells St. Peter, “I say not unto thee, ‘Until seven times;’ but, ‘Until seventy times seven.’” It is this conversation that prompts the parable of today. Our Lord + Jesus tells St. Peter, and us, to be more merciful. We are to show the same mercy to our fellowman that our Lord shows to us. Our Lord + Jesus shows us just how merciful the heavenly Father is toward those who believe on Him.

Ponder how merciful the certain king from the parable is: We are told that the king wanted to “make a reckoning” that is, settle his debts, with his servants. This shows us from the very beginning of the parable that our Lord is abundantly merciful to us and to all men. For what kind of king loans money to his servants? Maybe a normal king would make loans with his friends and trusted allies, but it is not normal for a king to loan to those who serve him. The king is already revealed as being generous and merciful by just being willing to loan to those who would not normally receive such benefit.

But we are told by our Lord + Jesus that the king, our heavenly Father, is even more generous and giving. For after the certain king of the parable began his reckoning, there is brought to him one who owed him “ten thousand talents.” Now, even if each talent was one dollar, that would still be a huge amount to be willing to loan to a servant. He was so generous that the king was willing to loan this

servant ten thousand talents: ten thousand dollars at a minimum. But a talent is way more than a dollar. To give you an idea of the amount this person owed let us learn first about the amount of a talent: A value of a talent varied greatly from different places and times, as the value of money is wont to do. At the time of this parable the talent was considered to be worth around six thousand drachmas or denarii to the talent. A denarii was equal to one day's wage. Therefore, this man owed the king sixty million denarii. He would have to work sixty million days to pay off this debt. Even if this man was paid a higher wage and worked all day it would take at least one thousand years to pay off his debt.

This is how abundantly generous the king in the parable was! He allowed this man to rack up one thousand years' worth of debt. Obviously, the point our Lord + Jesus is making with the parable and this servant is that this debt was never going to be paid off. There was no way for this man to pay his debt. This debt reveals the king's generosity and benevolence, but it also reveals the corruption of the servant. For he used this king's generosity with no regard for how he was going to pay him back. He clearly was not good with money for he kept coming back to borrow more, and yet it seems he gained very little from it. He did not elevate his position in life, he remained a servant, and he continued to squander the king's wealth racking up a debt he would never be able to pay back.

This is revealed when the king demands the debt be paid back. The servant was not able to pay it back. It is ordered that he be sold with his wife, children, and all his possessions in order to pay it back. Given the amount of the debt, I doubt this would have made much of a dent in paying back the king.

But our Lord + Jesus is establishing two spiritual things for us to understand with the beginning of this parable. First, the king, our heavenly Father, is abundantly generous with us when it comes to our sins. Rightfully our Lord God has every justification on account of our sins to demand our immediate eternal death and destruction. Our sins are like this wicked servant's debt. We who sin daily and much burning through our Lord's grace and mercy, rack up a debt of which we will never be able to pay. We will never be able to do enough good works to atone for our sins. Even if our wife and children and all our possessions were to be used to assist us in the payment, we would still never be able to pay back the debt that our sins have amassed. Therefore, our heavenly Father is very gracious toward us and all mankind, for He does not smite us immediately every time we sin; every time we rack up the debt of sin and add to our account of ten thousand talents.

And this is the second thing that our Lord + Jesus is establishing with the parable: that our sins are too great for us to pay back by our good works. We would never be able to pay them back. But our Lord would have us appeal to the mercy and grace of the king—the heavenly Father. For the servant with an unpayable debt fell down and worshiped the king and begged him to be merciful, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Even though he would never be able to pay the debt, the merciful and gracious king has compassion on the servant and forgives him his debt. This is how our Lord God treats us every time we get on our knees and ask forgiveness for our sins. He forgives them richly and abundantly. We heard that declaration of forgiveness a little while ago when we confessed our sins and heard the Absolution from the pastor. Our heavenly Father forgives us even though we will continue to sin in this life until the day we die. We will continue to rack up the debt of sin until the day we die.

After establishing how merciful our Lord God is, our Lord + Jesus answers St. Peter's question regarding the brother that sins against him. We are to forgive him "seventy times seven times." In other words, like our heavenly Father continues to forgive us even though we have racked up an unpayable debt, so too with our fellowman are we to forgive him richly and abundantly as often as he sins. For even if this debt of our neighbor was only seventy-seven times as some translations reckon it, it would still be too many for us to keep track of. Whether four hundred and ninety times or seventy-seven times we are to forgive those who sin against us even as our heavenly Father forgives us. We are not to be

like the wicked servant in the parable for today. Who did not forgive his fellow servant the small debt he owed him.

And this is not a small thing to pass over lightly. The debt the fellow servant owed the wicked servant was actually payable compared to his debt that had been forgiven. He owed him one hundred shillings; a hundred days wages. This debt could actually be paid by the fellow servant if he worked hard and dedicated himself to paying back the debt. So are all the sins against us by our fellowman, they pale in comparison to our debt to the Lord God. We are to show the same compassion for our fellowman as the Lord God shows us.

But this wicked servant did not show compassion towards his fellow servant. He even begs the wicked servant using the same phrase that he used with the compassionate king, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee." But the wicked servant retained his fellow man's small debt and cast him in prison until he could pay the debt. And this is why the king calls this servant "wicked" because only an evil person would be so crass as to demand a debt by paid back when he was forgiven so much. Only a wicked person retains the sins of those who sin against knowing that his sins have been paid in full.

For, my dear friends, we have been bought with a price. Our sins have been paid for with the suffering and death of our dear Lord + Jesus, the Christ. He won our forgiveness by offering up His life as an innocent sacrifice on the tree of the holy cross. He paid the debt that we can never repay. He died so that we might have eternal life. When we do not forgive those who sin against us, we reveal the wickedness of our hearts, and make a mockery of the sacrifice of our Lord + Jesus. We do not show our true appreciation for the great sacrifice our Lord made to free us from the burden of our sins and trespasses.

Therefore, since our Lord has abundantly forgiven us, we will also abundantly forgive those who sin against us, even as we pray every time we pray the Lord's Prayer: as our Lord has forgiven us, so too do we forgive those who have trespassed against us. For if we do not, our Lord instructs us in the parable how the heavenly Father will treat us. For the certain king was "wroth" at the wicked servant for his lack of mercy, and "delivered him to the tormentors." This implies the threat of Hell. Those who are unmerciful to their fellow man having received the mercy of the heavenly Father, deserve eternal death and destruction in Hell.

Let us therefore, my dear friends, rejoice that our heavenly Father has forgiven us of our all debts of sin. He has washed us in the Blood of the Lamb of God, which was shed on the tree of the holy cross, in the waters of Holy Baptism. And He feeds us with the Body and Blood of our Lord + Jesus in bread and wine for the remission of our sins, in the meal in which we remember and proclaim our Lord's death for the forgiveness of our sins. He also has declared us to be absolved of our sins by the mouth of the Pastor, who spoke the words of forgiveness to us today. Let us also show this same mercy that our Lord has had upon us to our fellow man, to each other. Let us not look at nor consider each other's sins. For we have all sinned much against God and man and are worthy of nothing but death and destruction. But our heavenly Father has had mercy upon us, let us also be merciful to one another in thanks and praise to our Lord God. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!