

Of all the parables of Jesus  
 This is probably the most extravagant.  
 One man owed a debt of 10,000 talents  
 And his master forgave him  
 Now for a little perspective...  
 In today's dollars... 10,000 talents are worth three and a half billion  
 dollars... Talk about a debt that could never be repaid. And what an  
 extravagant line of credit!

Now the second man owed a debt of 100 denarii.  
 That's about fifty-eight hundred dollars. A lot for somebody making  
 minimum wage... But nothing compared to 3.5 billion!

But when that first man came down hard on his fellow servant  
 His *entire debt* was re-instated  
 And he was tortured until the *entire* debt was paid.

***Grant mercy and forgiveness to others***  
***Just as mercy and forgiveness have been extended to you***  
**Or there will be dire consequences!**

Based upon *this*  
***Gratitude*** is not just a nice idea...  
 It's a *requirement!*

No wonder it's called Jesus' most extravagant parable.

Extravagant because of the enormous debt that was forgiven  
 But more than that... extravagant because There's no indication that the  
 servant *deserved* forgiveness. He wrote off the debt because he had pity  
 on the man. He wrote it off... because he was merciful.  
 Mercy... without boundaries.

The King did expect something in return  
 he expected that the indebted servant would show his gratitude  
 he didn't want to pay him back.  
 he wanted him to pay it forward.

At one time or another... We've all been forgiven... Sometimes...  
 When we didn't deserve it...

What we can do, is pay that debt forward  
 By forgiving those... who *cannot* repay us  
 What we can do... is show gratitude towards others...  
 What we can do... is what Jesus says we *should* do

Not because of a law on the books  
 Not because of divine demands  
 But because when we forgive others, we become better people  
 We become more Christ-like  
 And when we do, we shine with the light of Christ  
 And become glowing beacons of hope in an ever-darkening world

Martin Luther said

***O Lord, deliver me from Christian churches  
 with nothing but Christian saints in them.  
 I want to remain in and be part of a church  
 which is a little flock of faint-hearted people, weak people,  
 who know and feel their sin, their poverty, their misery,  
 and they believe in the forgiveness of God.***

Luther didn't mention worship services...  
 Or soul stirring music. Or powerful preaching.  
 Martin Luther wanted a community...  
 where people knew... understood... felt the need for forgiveness.  
 That's real Christian family... family that cares for each other.

How are we seen by others when we refuse forgiveness?

We heard what happened in the gospel reading

*When the fellow slaves saw what happened,  
they were greatly distressed*

That's what triggered the King's intervention

*It Wasn't* the cruelty of the indebted servant. No.

It was the *reaction* of the **other** servants

It was only after they cried out for justice

that the king revoked forgiveness of the debt.

Vengeance is mine, says the Lord

*not* the people... Not *us*...

Vengeance is the Lord's... and the Lord's alone

The people didn't attack the hypocritical servant. No.

They petitioned the king for justice. They weren't the enforcers.

That's the King's role

20 years ago, When the Health Network at Universal Studios in Orlando was about to be sold, workers were converted from employee status to contract workers. After the sale, they would be reinstated as employees of the new company with full benefits... On the day of the sale, security surrounded the building and locked everyone out. The former employees had no recourse. They had no standing. So they prayed...

A couple weeks later... an uninsured semi-truck, loaded with all of the Health Network's assets... all of the broadcasting equipment, editors, computers, cameras, sound gear... and all of the network's TV programs... Left Universal Studios... and burned to the ground on a remote highway in the middle of Texas.

God's justice is swift... Decisive.

We are NOT called to revenge  
 Jesus doesn't want us filled with anger...  
 Jesus doesn't want us to replace our joy with hatred...  
 Jesus does want us to deliver mercy and forgiveness. Never revenge.

And... Jesus earned the right to ask... even require... us to do that.  
 He *died* for us  
*Without* our asking  
 His relationship with us is surrounded by a love that knows no bounds  
 And *all* he asks, is that we return that love to him and to others  
 Including... those who don't deserve it...

It's not a matter of choice...  
 Our willingness to extend love and mercy to others...  
 Is the *best* way to show *gratitude*  
 For Jesus' priceless gift of forgiveness of OUR sins.  
 We never asked for it... and we don't deserve it... but it will shape our  
 destiny for eternity.

The books of a Scottish doctor were examined after his death.  
 A number of accounts were crossed through with a note:  
 "Forgiven--too poor to pay."  
 But the physician's widow decided these accounts must be paid in full.  
 When the case came to court the judge asked one question.  
 Is this your husband's handwriting?  
 Yes.  
 There is no court in the land that can obtain a debt once the word  
 forgiven has been written.

And that's the Good News this morning.  
 God never says... "I'll forgive but I won't forget."  
 God always says... "Forgiven, Forgotten Forever."

Across our debt is written,  
"Forgiven. Too poor to pay." Once a debt has been cancelled. No one  
can collect on it. God wipes it from his mind.

If we could only do that!  
If we could forgive others like that!  
If we could forgive ourselves like that!

A renowned theologian was asked to distill a lifetime of study and  
knowledge to One sentence... This is what he said...

There is a God... and it's not me...

So, go ahead.  
Forgive someone who doesn't deserve it.  
And show the world who's really in charge.