

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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[1] Goffine, *The Church's Year* pg. 449

[2] Ibid.

[3] Goffine, *The Church's Year* pg. 449-450

[4] Goffine, *The Church's Year* pg. 450

[5] CCC 982

[6] CCC 2845

Quick Connect

What is the Gospel saying? Matthew 18:15-20 — Pg. 1

What is the Church saying Past and Present? Pages 1-3

What is God saying to you through this passage? Page 4

Gospel Reading – Matthew 18:21-35 – Roman Missal

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave his the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart.”

Spiritual Reading

From a sermon by Saint John Chrysostom

The evil of remembering past offenses is twofold: it is inexcusable before God, and it serves to recall past sins already forgiven, and places them against us. And this is what happened here. For nothing, nothing whatsoever does God so hate, and turn away from, as cherishing remembrance of past offences, and fostering our anger against another. And this He reveals especially in this place, and also in the prayer in which He commands us to say: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us (Mt. 6:12). Instructed therefore in all these things, and with this parable inscribed in our hearts, let us, when the thought comes of what our fellow servants have done to us, think also of what we have done against our Lord; and then through remembrance of our own sins, we shall be able at once to banish the anger we feel at others' sins against us. And if we must remember offences, let us remember only our own. And if we remember our own sins, we shall never store up the sins of others. And again, should we forget the sins of others, our thoughts will then readily turn to the remembrance of our own. For if this man had remembered the ten thousand talents, he would never have remembered the hundred pence. It was when he had forgotten his own great debt, that he throttled his fellow servant; and determined to get back a few pence, and failing, he brought back upon his own head the debt of the ten thousand talents.

The Insurmountable Debt – Lesson and Discussion

“a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount”

In today’s parable Jesus speaks of people owing debts. Debt is something that is common to man, but the burden that earthly debt can bring upon man is nothing compared the eternal debt of sin. The debt of Adam and Eve’s original sin is a debt that is passed on to all humanity.

What is true about the debt of sin? First, it was a debt that was accrued by a human, therefore only a human could pay for it. Second, it was a debt that offended the eternal God. Because the one who was offended is eternal, the debt then is also eternal. It would appear impossible to pay this debt. The one who pays the debt must be human but also eternal. No human is eternal, for every human comes into existence. The only possibly that the debt would be paid is for the Eternal Word, to become incarnate. God must become man, take on flesh and pay the price for Adam and Eve. Jesus is the new Adam.

What is meant by the ten thousand talents? How much is “ten thousand talents”? In today’s terms, a thousand talents is equal to a million dollars or in this case ten million dollars! “The ten thousand talents, according to our money [is] more than ten million dollars”[1] This huge sum of money is being asked to be paid off by a poor servant. We are the poor servant, that cannot paid his debt. The number also represents the mortal sin we have committed. No matter how much money the poor man will try and save there is no way he can ever save enough to pay it all off by the time he dies. Spiritually, there is nothing we can do to pay off our mortal sin before we die. “...mortal sin, the guilt of which is so great that no creature can pay it; even all the works of the saints cannot make atonement, because by every mortal sin the infinitely great, good, and holy God is offended, which offence it is as impossible for any creature to cancel as it is for a poor servant to pay a debt of ten million dollars. Nevertheless God is so merciful that He remits the whole immeasurable debt of sin, on account of the infinite merits of Christ, if the sinner contritely begs forgiveness and amends his life.”[2]

Why are there two different amounts owed in the parable? The servant owes the master a “huge amount”. The servant is owed by a fellow servant a “smaller amount”. When we sin, we sin against God and neighbor. An offense against God is “huge” because God is eternal. An offense against our neighbor, because our neighbor is temporal is a “smaller amount”. An offense against our neighbor however is an offense against God. This is taught to us by Jesus when He says, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40). Jesus says to Saul, while Saul was in the midst of persecuting and murdering Christians, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” He said, “Who are you, sir?” The reply came, “I am Jesus , whom you are persecuting.” (Acts 9:4-5). Jesus was making it clear to Saul that when he persecuted Christians he was persecuting Jesus. These words and the reality of his offenses, would cause a conversion of heart and thus change Saul into Saint Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

Why does the wife and children have to be sold? “Probably because they assisted in contracting the debt, or gave occasion for its increase. This is a warning to those who in any way make themselves partakers of others’ sins, either by counsel, command, consent, provocation, praise or flattery, concealment, partaking, silence and by defending ill-done things.”[3]

What does Jesus intend to show by this parable? He shows us two things: first, that God is ever merciful towards mankind and that through the merits of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus we are forgiven Original Sin at Baptism and actual sins committed after Baptism in Confession. By the holy cross we have been saved, we are being saved and we hope to be saved. Second, by the power of the Holy Spirit we are infused with gifts which we should live out in order to show mercy and forgiveness to others. “That if God is so merciful and forgives us our immense debts, we should be merciful and willingly forgive our fellow men the slight faults and offences, which they commit against us; he who does not this, will not receive pardon from God, in him will be verified the words of the apostle St. James: judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy (Jas. 2:13)”[4]

Today, the Church extends the same forgiveness through the Sacraments here on earth. “There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. ‘There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest.’ Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin.”[5]

Is there ever a debt that can’t be forgiven? No. Any debt of sin we may have accumulated can be forgiven in the beautiful sacrament of Reconciliation. “There is no limit or measure to this essentially divine forgiveness, whether one speaks of ‘sins’ as in (Luke 11:4), or ‘debts’ as in (Matthew 6:12). We are always debtors: ‘Owe no one anything except to love one another.’ The communion of the Holy Trinity is the source and criterion of truth in every relationship. It is lived out in prayer, above all in the Eucharist.”[6]