

Homily - September 13, 2020

Today's parable is a terrible example of forgiveness. Jesus just taught that mercy and forgiveness needs to be limitless. Then the king in the parable, forgives once, then he un-forgives. If this is how God is, we are in terrible trouble.

The servant debtor does not forgive at all, and his fellow servants also fail to forgive in their quest for what seems like a righteous call for justice. The result is that chaos breaks out.

The first servant ends up being tortured for eternity, with his family and property all being sold. I think that Matthew misintroduced this parable. He should have written: "this is why the kingdom of heaven may not be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants."

What happens when there is no forgiveness? Escalating violence! Even the cry for justice ends up being entangled in evil. Therefore, don't do like this parable.

Matthew is correct in quoting Jesus' teaching that this is exactly what happens unless we forgive each other from the heart. Don't misunderstand me.

We still need to work for justice, but justice must be always tempered with mercy and forgiveness.

Without forgiveness, we always end up entangled with evil. Last week, we reflected on Jesus' relentless drive for Reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot happen without forgiveness.

In the parable, rather than forgiving, everyone is keeping score. In relationships, this is always a huge mistake. If the score is being kept, forgiveness is never really given or received. Everyone remains trapped and weighed down by the past.

As humans, we have a hard time forgiving. We never do forget and indeed we should learn from experience. If a person is not trustworthy, we may forgive them, but we will not easily trust them again until they prove themselves trustworthy. True forgiveness flows from the heart of God. Mercy is something we often cannot manage to muster. We must pray for mercy to flow through us from God.

Jesus reveals that the very nature of God is mercy. We must let our hearts be opened to the heart of God and let God's shocking forgiveness enter us and

flow through us to others. When God's mercy is extended through us, it sets the other free; it gives them a new start. It also sets us free. We are able to let go of our hurt and anger.

How is the escalating cycle of anger and violence broken? Let the surprising mercy of God flow through our hearts.