

My dear brothers and sisters, today's Gospel presents a parable that highlights the quality of God's **compassion and forgiveness**. Jesus tells a story about a king who decides to "settle his accounts with his servants." In this story, the king shows compassion to one of his servants, but that servant does not do likewise. Jesus's parable makes clear that the king – which is to say our loving God – is enormously compassionate in dealing with us and expects us to be compassionate in dealing with one another. If we ourselves hope for compassion, should we not create a society in which compassion permeates all our relationships? As Christians, **it is incumbent upon us to be compassionate**. The first reading advises us - Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the Lord? Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins?

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us another parable of the Kingdom. The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants....A debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount....The servant...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 him the loan. We have here a debtor who owes his master ten thousand talents, which amounted to ten million days' wages. Responding to the debtor's request, the king, in an act of subtle sensitivity, changes the obligation from a debt to a loan. Did you notice that in the reading? It tells us: "**Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan.**" What is striking is that the debtor didn't ask for forgiveness; he asked only for time to pay it back. How could he possibly think he could pay back the huge obligation he owed his master? We should also keep in mind that Jesus is talking about your spiritual condition as well as mine. All of Jesus' parables are not about other people; they are about us.

Filled with self-righteousness, the debtor went out and found a fellow servant, one of his equal, who owed him a small amount of money. It amounted to only a hundred days' wages, a very small sum compared to ten thousand talents he himself owed. Instead of treating his fellow servant with compassion, **he treats his fellow servant to a strict application of the law** and, after choking him, has his fellow servant thrown into debtor's prison (Mt.18:30).

The king then acts on behalf of the powerless. He exercises legal judgment and employs the law on behalf of the poor and powerless fellow servant. **He applies the full force of the law against the debtor who owed him the ten thousand talents** (Mt.18:34). We need to see that God comes to us looking for change in our hearts, not simply a change in our ways of thinking and acting. Changing our ways are "externals", not "internals." It's your heart that God wants.

Jesus wants to tell us that we should **forgive without limit and forgiveness is liberating**, and it is the most liberating for the one doing the forgiving. Forgiveness allows us to walk in the freedom of the sons and daughters of God, not as children of the law. Jesus Christ teaches us to ask God to "**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us**" (Mt.6:12, 14). As is the controlling word – we will be forgiven to the length, height and depth that we measure out forgiveness to others, all the while remembering that the people we forgive are forgiven only if they repent, convert their hearts, and then actually accept forgiveness. For forgiveness to work both parties must be involved.

Brothers and sisters, I wish to end with quotation from wisdom literature (Sir.27:30; 28:1-6): Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. The vengeful will suffer the Lord's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor's injustice; **then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven**. Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the Lord? Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins...? Remember your last day, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin! Amen!