

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” That is how our Lord taught us to pray. In His perfect model prayer He places these Words upon our lips that we rightly ask God, for to pray according to God’s Word is always in accord with His good and gracious will. It is what faith sincerely desires.

It is in the flesh of fallen men to minimize their sins. Men come to believe that their sins aren’t really all that bad. They look around, and see the debauchery and perversity of this world filled with unbelief and transgression. They compare their sins to those of others, and judging themselves, find that their sins are much less egregious than the sins that fill the news each day.

So in comparison, by condemning others as greater sinners, they feel vindicated, even emboldened to continue in their sins because in their hearts they have minimized their sins. They have come to believe they are not that bad.

Consider the servant in the Lord’s parable. He was rightly sentenced to be sold by his master that his debt be repaid. But his master was a compassionate man. When the servant begged leniency, the master extended it. More than not selling him to cover his debt, the master forgave his debt. He wiped the slate clean. He erased a debt that would have taken a lifetime to repay. And that seemed right to the servant, who quickly went his way.

Shown such great compassion, the servant was unwilling to extend it. Sinners are like that. Men are egocentric. They are concerned with themselves first. So forgiven his huge debt, the servant was unwilling to forgive the debt of one who owed him a very small repayment. In his sin, that seemed right to him too.

When that servant begged, using the very words he had spoken to his master, the servant forgiven much was unwilling to have mercy. He showed no compassion. He was thinking only of himself. He had no concern for the wellbeing of the other man. He simply wanted what was his. The servant who had his great debt forgiven had his debtor thrown into prison.

The master was right to be angry. And turning him over to the torturers was just. But the parable is only an example, a rule by which to measure yourself. The Lord speaks in parables that you might learn eternal truths. And you have a place in the parable. But you are not the master, and you are not the servant who owed a little. Your debt to the True Master, God, is great. Your debt to God exceeds your ability to pay.

Your transgressions, your doubts, your failures, your self-justification, your willingness to compare yourself to others and find them to be worse sinners, your lack of compassion in dealing with others, your ego-centrism, your sin, your transgressions, cannot go unpunished. Justice must be done. And for your sins the just punishment is eternal, the torturers the unquenchable fire and the worm that does not die.

But the True Master, the God of Love, the God of Compassion, looks upon you in mercy. He knows your debt is too great, your transgressions too many, your sins too vile. He knows that you cannot repay, you cannot settle your account. In love, He is moved with compassion. And

in love He releases you, and forgives you all your debt. But that debt must be paid, even though you can't pay it. For that, for the cancellation of your debt, God sent His Son.

He who is God, He who was with God the Father from eternity, He who is the True Master, became a Servant to take your place. He took on your flesh to redeem you. He humbled Himself to the born of the Virgin Mary and was made Man. He was a perfect Servant, incurring no debt. But He willingly gave Himself to be turned over to the torturers to earn your salvation.

He was arrested in your place. The humiliating stripping was rightly your stripping. The stripes He bore were yours. Although innocent, He was found guilty. He was sentenced in your place. He was crucified and died for you, in your stead. That was His Servant's Work. Although faithful, although merciful, He became for you the most wicked of servants, bearing the sins of the world.

He served the just sentence. And on the cross He declared of your debt "It is finished." He rendered His life to pay your debt in full – your debt to God, your debts to others, and the debt of all men. Your Master is moved with compassion, and He forgives you your debt. In Christ, all your sins are forgiven.

In this faith rejoices. Every day you have the forgiveness, the mercy, the compassion of God. And you have the gift of faith, faith worked by the Holy Spirit, faith in Jesus Christ. You believe that He died and rose for you, and His forgiveness is yours. And as the Apostle writes, by faith, your love abounds more and more. You have true knowledge and discernment. And you approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the Day of Christ.

Solomon writes "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, who gains understanding." Christ is the power and wisdom of God. God has redeemed you and given you faith. You have Christ. His proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and His gain better than fine gold. Knowledge of Him is more precious than rubies, and all the things you desire cannot compare with Him.

Length of days is in His Right Hand, in His left riches and honor. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths peace. The Crucified and Risen One is a Tree of Life to those who take hold of Him by faith, and blessed are all you who retain Him. That you retain Him, that you cling to Him, He comes to you.

You hear His Word, His Promises. You are baptized into Him. His Holy Absolution is spoken over you. Blessed is the man that finds Christ, Who places His Body and Blood with Bread and Wine that you eat and drink the True Master, Who by the Holy Eucharist makes you His Body, His Holy Church.

So does the Apostle write of all those, of you, dear Christian, you who have saving faith in Jesus Christ, "...being confident of this very thing: that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." It is you who are filled with the fruits of righteousness, to the glory and praise of God.

St. Matthew 18:21-35
The Fourth Sunday after Michaelmass, 2017 A.✠ D.

In Christ your account is settled, in Him you are forgiven, in Him you are set free, no longer a servant, but a blessed child of God, an heir to the riches of His Kingdom. In faith you love God, and you love your neighbor. Forgiven in Christ you find faith to forgive your brother from your heart, not seven times, but up to seventy times seven, for the forgiveness God extends to you is boundless.

“And the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.”

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