

Third Tuesday of Lent – 2/26

"You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt." (Matthew 18:21-35)

Life is about to get really nasty for the slave in this parable. He is about to be tortured until he pays back all of his considerable debt. And Jesus tells us that the Father will treat us likewise if we cannot forgive from our hearts.

Too often we worry that God will not forgive us, but that should be the least of our concerns. God forgives as readily and as generously as the lord in this parable. In fact as soon as we seek God's mercy it is given. Forgiveness is immediately available to those seeking it, but there is one little codicil that God attached to this forgiveness. We must forgive our neighbors in the same way, and that is difficult.

It is so hard in fact that sometimes we might almost prefer to stay "unforgiven" than to have to be reconciled with our neighbor. Hearts that thought they wished for freedom suddenly decide that slavery isn't so bad because then they don't have to free anyone else.

This forgiveness thing is a big issue for Jesus. He is big on giving it and big on expecting that we give it too. If we are to be like Him this will have to be one of the main aspects of our lives.

Recently a man told how his father and his uncle had not been able to reconcile after an argument years earlier. Now the father was sick with heart disease. The son was told that part of the father's heart was blocked off from an old heart attack. The son suggested that this blockage was as much spiritual as it was physical. Perhaps, he said, the blockage began when the father and uncle refused to be reconciled.

Jesus' stern warning seems to indicate that He was concerned about this kind of blockage as well. Jesus wants us to fear the consequences of being merciless. When we are forgiven our sins we are free, but that freedom must be shared with those who have wronged us. This warning from Jesus suggests that we all need to practice frequent acts of forgiveness. And who knows, perhaps we will find that our own hearts will beat a little easier.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How could I better share my time and talents with the church?*
- 2. Whom do I need to forgive?*

Prayer: Jesus, may I learn to forgive as readily as You forgive me. Amen.