

24th Sunday of Ordinary Time Sept 17 2017 Year A Matt 18:21-25

Jesus never discloses exactly the details of heaven. Instead Our Lord uses, comparatives, perhaps to nurture some amount of imagination on our part. Jesus always meets us where we are and teaches with relatable metaphors. In today's parable. Heaven is, we learn, a place absent of anger and revenge. One governed by mercy, forgiveness, and love. We catch glimpses of heaven in our world today, but they never seem to last very long. What prevents from us from experiencing the heaven for which our hearts so deeply long to be united. Must we wait for nature to extinguish our bodies?

The Master in our parable had every legal right, in that period, to sell into slavery his debtor and even that man's innocent wife and children. He is well within his rights to foreclose on all that person's property, and we know well, where that leaves his dependents. Complete poverty for possibly generations. But with a seemingly contrite heart in desperate voice, the debtor negotiates a plea. And this is all the Master is waiting for to release incredibly mercy. He is willing to pay back the Master, even if he has no idea at the time, how he will do so.

In return, the Master releases the debtor from his bond and cancels the debt, at least for the moment. The man had nothing afterwards to do, but be thankful and act similarly to how he had been treated. Nothing to pay back, with instead much to give away. Namely mercy and compassion! It becomes however, a missed opportunity and the debtor blows it badly when a fellow-servant, who owes only a little, he has thrown in jail with zero mercy. Did he think the mercy he had just been shown was simply another material transaction and he a winner without obligations? How short the effects of incoming mercy once the stresses of life subside? How difficult it is to rid ourselves of anger and revenge when another begs for our mercy. Mercy and revenge cannot share, nor can they dwell in the same heart simultaneously.

Pope Francis writes in his book entitled, *The Name of God is Mercy*, that “The corrupt person is the one who does not repent, who pretends to be Christian, and it is this double life that is scandalous.” Someone like the character in Jesus’ parable who begs for mercy but couldn’t extend even a little to another. The Holy Father goes on to say that “Sin is more than a stain. Sin he says is a wound that needs to be treated and healed.

If there be a happy fault, it is because God's incredible and healing mercy awaits the repentant believer. Mercy then is the healing ointment, God applies to our wounds and expects that we will apply to the wounds of our brothers and sisters. When we accept, but cease to distribute God's Mercy, it is not nothingness, but anger and revenge which rushes in like a wild fire to consume our hearts. Don't give anger and mean spiritedness any fuel to burn us. It is all too ready to encamp and destroy the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit for which you were purposed by your Baptism.

In September of 2017 we can ask, not if, but rather where similar places in need of mercy beckon us today. Well no one gets angry on the Deerfoot Friday afternoon. Do they? And I don't think anyone gossips anymore, do they? Leaders of nations, all seem to be getting along just fine. We don't bargain people any longer, right? And haven't we gotten rid of slavery? Hmmm, I hope you hear the hyperbole. In God's economy we are treasures, if but wounded. Slavery friends still plague the world and it's not just a third world problem. Each time we treat the other as object and without mercy we enable and even propagate a spirit of slavery.

Without mercy, cruelty seeps into our lives and enslaves us to worry, despair, anger, and revenge. Who then should expect mercy be shown, when we ourselves are burning with anger and plotting revenge? Where then might we tap into a little of God's soothing and healing mercy? The answer is of course by living most fully our baptism and by experiencing, Jesus in his Holy Word and in the Sacraments of the Church, most perfectly in the real presence of Holy Eucharist.

Friends let strive to become faithful stewards of the gifts we have received and of course this parish. A Eucharistic people will always be thankful and merciful serving our brothers and sisters in joy and peace.

A king on a tropical paradise ordered his gardener to bring him some fruit from his expansive orchard. The gardener brought cherries, but when the king tasted them, the first one was sour. The foul king went into a fit of rage with cursing and violence. He fired the sour cherry back at the gardener, beaming him right in the head. The gardener just smiled and said, "**My Master** sure is merciful today". How can you say that, hollered back the even more furious king? Well, said the gardener, I was going to bring you pineapples today. Amen