

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Mar 5th 2024

We are debtors of God's love and mercy

When someone offends us, our spontaneous reaction is not forgiveness but resentment or anger, especially when the damage has left deep wounds. Certain hurt feelings do not disappear over time; some of those wounds even last a lifetime. In such instances, the natural reaction would be to pay back, to avenge the pain that has been caused. This primitive instinct in history caused duels and endless struggles between tribes and nations. Forgiveness does not come spontaneously.

In the Lord's prayer, we ask the Father to "forgive our debt". The sins that we have committed do not represent all of our debts. Sins relate to the past, and they are not infinite. They are only a tiny sign of the immense distance separating us from the Father's love. Our prayer, "Forgive us our debts", is not just about past mistakes, but it's directed especially to the future. We grow in debt to a person when we receive something from him, and he expects us to return it in due time.

God has bestowed on us His mercy and compassion, and he expects us to return it! What God grants us in abundance are his love and compassion. He wants us to return it or share it with our brother or sister without hesitation. He wants us not to keep the brother or sister a slave of his or her past. It is the desire of our brethren / that we do not take their breath away while they desperately try to rise up from the chasm. God asks us to help them seventy times seven without excuses. The children of the Kingdom of God are "merciful as the heavenly Father" (Lk 6:36). If we are willing to accept this new logic, we will be willing to lose, to forget all our rights to see our brother happy again, peaceful and freed.

The last scene in today's gospel gives us shudders (vv. 31-35). The conclusion is puzzling: "So will my heavenly Father do with you unless you sincerely forgive your brothers and sisters."

Does it mean that the Lord would repay, therefore, in the same coin, those who are ruthless with their "debtors?" Such an interpretation would contradict the whole message of the parable that wishes to present a God who always forgives human transgressions. It would be a blasphemous interpretation to consider it as a description of the behaviour of the Father, who is infinite love and mercy.

The evangelist is not describing what God would do in the end, but the parable presents what God wants you and me to do today.

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