



Living and Sharing the Gospel

Weekly bulletin  
November 1, 2020

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week.. Please let Mr. Vautour know if you would like to be added to the weekly email list. See the bottom of the bulletin for the contact information

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

For more information about special activities happening in GCI international, please see the website at [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org). On the left-hand upper side of the screen, click on "PARTICIPATE". Click on it. A drop-down menu will appear. Click on "GCI UPDATE".

Please note that audio and video sermons are available at [www.worshiphim.ca](http://www.worshiphim.ca) and video sermons are now available on YouTube – GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL-MONCTON (see link below)

**Next Bible Study: Thursday, November 5 at 7:30 PM continuing with 2 and 3 John.**

**Please take note that November 29, we will have services from head office in the USA. Exceptionally, worship services will be at 1 PM on that day**

If you have a prayer requests, other events you would like to announce and/or praise to our great God you would like to share, please try to contact Mr. Vautour by email, text or telephone no later than Saturday in the morning.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to [www.worshiphim.ca](http://www.worshiphim.ca) – under "Members Only" and type the password.

Let us pray for the Church to put first things first which is to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our mind. The secondary commandment and flowing from the first is to love our neighbour as ourselves. Let us pray according to God's will as per his instructions: "1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:1-4 ESV)

**Offerings:** you can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.** Thank you for your continued generous giving to God by giving to this part of God's church, his body.

**For those living in Moncton area, if you wish, you can drop your offerings in our mailbox. I will mail them with the ministerial expenses at the end of each month.**

**From Mr. Bill Hall – GCI Canadian Director** "We will continue to process the donations we receive in Saskatoon. Members are urged to mail them directly to our office for the time-being. They can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using **the donate button** on our website [www.gcicanada.ca](http://www.gcicanada.ca) located at bottom of the page on the right side as you scroll down. We are waving the provision that all donations given via Canada Helps go toward national expenses for the time being. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend."

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## The Gospels: Matthew 20 – Parable of Workers in the Vineyard

### A parable of unfairness

In **Matthew 20** is the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Some men worked all day long in the heat of the day. Some worked only half a day, and some worked only one hour, but they all got paid the same amount, a day's wage. Some got exactly what they agreed to, but others got more. However, the men who worked all day long said, **"That's not fair. We worked all day long, and it's not fair to pay us the same as those who worked less"** (see **verse 12**). But the men who worked all day got exactly what they had agreed to before they began work (**verse 4**). The only reason they got upset was because other people got more than they deserved.

What did the paymaster say? He said: **"Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"** (**verse 15**).

The boss said he would give them a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, and that's what he did—and yet the workers complained. Why? Because they compared themselves with others and they got the shorter end of the stick. They got their hopes up, and then they were disappointed.

But the landowner said: **"I am doing you no wrong. If you think it's not fair, the problem is in what you expected, not in what you actually got. If it hadn't been for the amount I paid the newcomers, you would be quite happy with what I gave you. The problem is in your expectations, not in what I did. You accuse me of being bad, simply because I was good to someone else** (see **verse 15**).

How would you react to this? What would you think if your boss gave a bonus to the newest employees, but not to the old faithful workers? It would not be very good for morale, would it? But Jesus was not giving us payroll advice here—he was telling a parable about the kingdom of God (**verse 1**).

The parable reflected something that was happening in Jesus' ministry. God was giving salvation to people who hadn't worked very hard, and the religious leaders said: "That's not fair. You can't be generous to them. We've been working hard, and they have hardly been working." **And Jesus replied, "I am bringing good news to sinners, not to the righteous."** His teaching threatened to undermine the normal motive for doing good.

### Where do we fit in?

We might like to think that we have worked all day long, bearing the burdens and the heat of the day, deserving a good reward. But we have not. It doesn't matter how long you've been in the church or how many sacrifices you have made; those are nothing in comparison to what God is giving us. Paul worked harder than any of us; he made more sacrifices for the gospel than we realize, but he counted it all as a loss for Christ. It was nothing.

The time we've spent in the church is nothing to God. The work we've done is nothing compared to what he can do. Even at our best, as another parable says, we are unprofitable servants (**Luke 17:10**). Jesus has bought our entire lives; he has fair claim on every thought and every action. We cannot possibly give him anything on top of that—even if we do everything he commands.

We are really like the workers who worked only one hour and got a whole day's wage. We just barely got started, and we were paid like we actually did something useful. Is that fair? Maybe we shouldn't even ask the question. If the judgment is in our favor, we shouldn't ask for another evaluation!

Do we think of ourselves as people who have worked long and hard? Do we think we deserve more than we are getting? Or do we see ourselves as people who are getting an undeserved gift, regardless of how long we've worked?

*Author: Joseph Tkach*

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## HE GOSPELS: MATTHEW 18 – PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

### It's Hard to Forgive

*Jesus often said that God is merciful. But he also said, in a statement that can send chills up the spine, "If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15, NRSV). Do we have to forgive everyone? Apparently so—yet no one does it perfectly. We don't do anything perfectly. So how can we ever hope for the Father to forgive us?*

### Examples



*After a brief romance, George and Judy married. After an equally brief marriage, Judy walked out on him, crushing his ego like an eggshell on a railroad track. Even 10 years later, George has deep scars from his wound. Is Judy's "sorry, but I want to move on" an apology? Is there ever an acceptable apology for that sort of betrayal?*

Bob was the youngest child in a family of seven. He “borrowed” all of his parents’ money and lost it in gambling. He’s broke now, and the older siblings have to take care of the elderly parents. How can they forgive Bob, when they are still suffering from what he did?



Or perhaps you know someone like Susan, Chris or Karl. Susan was abused by her stepfather, and 30 years later she still struggles with a distorted self-image. Chris was paralyzed in an accident caused by a drunk driver. Karl was left an orphan when his father committed suicide. The sinners are dead, and can't repent or apologize. Can these victims forgive the people who caused them such pain, or would that trivialize the sin?

What other choice do we have, though? If we hang on to anger, it will eventually eat us from the inside out, like acid in an iron pot. We will become bitter, ulcerated, depressed and unpleasant—we add to our own damage and pain. Anger raises our blood pressure and hurts our heart. For our own health, we need to forgive—but it's hard to forgive.

#### **Forgiving another believer**

**“Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times’” (Matt. 18:21-22, NIV).** Imagine that someone in the church has hurt your feelings, and the person says “sorry.” And he or she does it again, and says “sorry.” And it happens again, and again you hear “sorry.” And again, and again, and again. At what point are you going to say, “I don't think you're really sorry?” Maybe the person isn't sorry, but Jesus says to forgive them anyway, even 77 times. Try saying “I forgive you” that many times! It might be good therapy.

Jesus said **“forgive,”** not **“forget,”** and there is an important difference. Jesus has not forgotten who betrayed him, or deserted him, or ordered his execution, but Jesus does not harbor grudges about it. He wants those people to accept the forgiveness that he offers—he died for them as well as for everyone else. (When the Bible says that God does not remember our sins any more, it is not talking about forgetfulness—it is using the word remember in the sense of taking action on something. [Ex. 2:24](#) is an example of this meaning of “remember.”)



Jesus then told a parable that explains why we should forgive: **“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents [an enormous amount] was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt” (Matt. 18:23-25).** The king represents God, of course, and the debt corresponds to our sins. We are totally unable to pay for our sins. Even selling ourselves into slavery would pay only a small fraction of the debt. We can't work our way out of this one.

**“The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go” (vs. 26-27).** We can't pay our debt, but if we ask for mercy, God will give us more than we ask. That's what the kingdom of God is like. (As an aside here, we can see that the servant didn't have a totally accurate understanding of God's grace. He asked for mercy, but it seems that he still thought he could do something to repay his debt. That's like a lot of Christians today, who don't really believe they are forgiven unless they have done some kind of penance. Yet God forgives them anyway, even if they don't understand how sweeping his forgiveness really is.)

So far, so good. It would be a great parable if Jesus just stopped right here. But Jesus did not stop here, and the second part of the parable makes me squirm a little. But I have to remember that Peter's question is not whether he is forgiven, but whether he has to forgive others—and this is the task that we frequently face.

#### **The unmerciful servant**

**“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded” (v. 28).** The first servant was determined to pay off his own debt by collecting every cent he could.

A hundred denarii was a significant amount, but it was only a tiny fraction of the 10,000 talents. But every penny counts, the servant must have thought, and he even used a little violence to underscore his determination to collect. Christians today do this as well. When they think they have to earn God's respect through obedience and good works, they look down on people who aren't trying as hard as they are.

**“His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back’ [which is what the first servant had said to his master]. But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt” (vs. 29-30).** He wanted the man's relatives to cough up the money to get the guy out of jail. He was playing hardball in a desperate attempt to gather enough cash to impress the king with his sincerity.

**“When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’” (vs. 31-33).** This chapter is about life in a community, not just between one person and God. This is a small reminder in this parable that our actions affect other people, and that we should encourage one another to give mercy, just as we have been given mercy.

Now here is where the parable turns into a warning: **“In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (vs. 34-35).** Shocking!—Jesus represents God as taking away the forgiveness he once gave, and inflicting punishment, knowing quite well that the man will never be able to “pay back all he owed.” But Jesus is not attempting to tell us about the nature of eternal punishment—he is simply presenting this as a warning, with terms appropriate to the parable, that we must forgive others not grudgingly, but from the heart.

#### **Faulty forgiveness**

But is Jesus laying on us an impossible burden? It is easy to say “you are forgiven,” but it is difficult to mean it in our heart. Aren’t we still angry at the injustice that was done to us? Don’t we still hurt when we think about it? Don’t we still want the person to be punished for what was done? What are we to do with the vial of bitterness we have accumulated in our thoughts?

If this parable had been longer, maybe it would have gone something like this:

“And the wicked servant said, ‘O my king, you are right. You have been patient with me; I should be just as patient with my fellow servants. Please do not throw me in jail. Have mercy on me again. I will forgive the people who ask me for mercy.’ And the king said, ‘You are forgiven.’

“And the wicked servant went out and found a woman who owed him 50 denarii, and he demanded to be repaid within a week. The woman was exceedingly sorrowful, and sold herself into slavery to pay the debt. And since she did not ask for mercy, none was given.

“The other servants found out about this and reported it to the king, and the king was angry and called the wicked servant in again, saying: ‘You wicked servant! I forgave your huge debt because you asked me to. Can you not see that the poor woman wanted mercy even though she was afraid to ask?’ Therefore I will throw you into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

“The wicked servant then said: ‘O my king, you are right again. If you forgive me this time, I will sell some of my possessions to redeem the woman from slavery.’ ‘Well done,’ said the king, ‘you may go.’ And the wicked servant went out and straightway forgot what he had promised.

“And he was reported to the king again, was threatened with punishment again, asked for mercy again, and was forgiven again. And I ask you, how many times will the king forgive—seven times? Nay, he will do it seventy-seven times. That is what the kingdom of heaven is like. God is even more merciful than what he tells us to be.”

In other words, God even forgives our imperfect attempts at forgiveness, as long as we look to him for mercy.

#### **The key to forgiving**

The better we understand that we are forgiven, the better we can forgive others. That does not mean thinking (as the wicked servant may have), “Thanks for your patience; I will still try to repay all that I owe.” If we have that attitude, then we still overestimate our abilities, and we will still expect people to pay all that they owe us—groveling for everything they’ve done to us.

But the truth (which the wicked servant could have known, if he had listened carefully) is that when God forgives us, we are forgiven. There is no debt to repay. There’s nothing to work off, no penance to perform, no need to prove how sincere we were this time. It’s forgiven—it’s gone.

Another point from the parable that will help us forgive others: We have been forgiven an enormous debt; the sins that people commit against us are much smaller. Even if someone beats you to a bloody mess and nails you to die on a cross, God has forgiven you more than that. Perhaps you find that hard to believe, as I do, but this is the point of what Jesus is saying, and he has earned the right to say it.

Forgiveness does not mean that we pretend like nothing ever happened. It does not mean trusting a swindler with money, trusting a wife-beater to not get abusive again, or appointing a child-molester to be a youth pastor. However, forgiving means that we do not harbor grudges, we do not seek vengeance. *It means letting go of our need to get even.* It means praying for our enemies. It means seeing ourselves in their shoes, knowing that God has, for the sake of Christ, forgiven us all our sins too. No groveling required. God does not want us to sin again, but his mercy lasts forever.

God wants us to forgive, and he knows that it's hard. He wants us to obey him in everything, and he knows that we don't. That's why our salvation does not depend on our performance, but on the righteousness of Christ. Our salvation does not depend on our performance in keeping the law, or in having enough faith, or in forgiving as well as we ought. In all these areas, we are sinners who fall short of the glory of God.

Our salvation depends not on us, but on Christ, and on our connection to him. He is the one who forgives with the sincerity and frequency that is required, and when our lives are hidden in Christ ([Col. 3:3](#)), God attributes Christ's perfect obedience, including his perfect forgiveness, to us.

God wants us to forgive others because he forgives us. He forgives us far more generously than 77 times. The point is that we are to realize our need for mercy, look to him for mercy, depend on his mercy, and instead of harboring our hurts and nursing our grievances, we need to ask him to help us begin to forgive others.

In this world of sin and ignorance, offenses are inevitable. We've all been hurt. So, what's the worst thing that has happened to you? What resentment do you carry? For our own good, we need to let our resentments go. Jesus will help us—that's something worth praying about.

Author: Joseph Tkach

**GCI principle website and Moncton Websites**—a) [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org) , b) [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) , c) <https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton> ; d)

Grace Communion International-Moncton <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKazyWhmKmDZy69vJcFfPg>

For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.

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