

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you,
that your prophets be found true.
Hear the prayers of your servant,
and of your people Israel.

GLORIA

Glorify to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Look upon us, O God,
Creator and ruler of all things,
and that we may feel the working of your
mercy,
grant that we may serve you with all our
heart.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Ecclesiasticus 27:30 – 28:7

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus.
Resentment and anger, these are foul things,
and both are found with the sinner.
He who exacts vengeance will experience
the vengeance of the Lord, who keeps strict
account of sin.
Forgive your neighbour the hurt he does you,
and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.
If a man nurses anger against another,
can he then demand compassion from the
Lord?
Showing no pity for a man like himself,
can he then plead for his own sins?
Mere creature of flesh, he cherishes
resentment;
who will forgive him his sins?
Remember the last things, and stop hating,
remember dissolution and death, and live by
the commandments.
Remember the commandments, and do not
bear your neighbour ill-will;
remember the covenant of the Most High,
and overlook the offence.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 61

Response:
The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.

1. My soul, give thanks to the Lord,
all my being, bless his holy name.
My soul, give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings. (R.)
2. It is he who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and
compassion. (R.)
3. His wrath will come to an end;
he will not be angry for ever.
He does not treat us according to our sins
nor repay us according to our faults. (R.)
4. For as the heavens are high above the
earth
so strong is his love for those who fear
him.
As far as the east is from the west
so far does he remove our sins. (R.)

SECOND READING

Romans 14:7-9

A reading from the letter to the Romans.

The life and death of each of us has its
influence on others; if we live, we live for the
Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord, so
that alive or dead we belong to the Lord. This
explains why Christ both died and came to
life, it was so that he might be Lord both of
the dead and of the living.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening:
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:21-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

Peter went up to Jesus and said, "Lord,
how often must I forgive my brother if he
wrong me? As often as seven times?" Jesus
answered, "Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-
seven times.
"And so the kingdom of heaven may be
compared to a king who decided to settle
his accounts with his servants. When the
reckoning began, they brought him a man
who owed ten thousand talents; but he had
no means of paying, so his master gave
orders that he should be sold, together with
his wife and children and all his possessions,
to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw
himself down at the master's feet. 'Give me
time', he said, 'and I will pay the whole sum.'
And the servant's master felt so sorry for him
that he let him go and cancelled the debt.
Now as this servant went out, he happened
to meet a fellow servant who owed him one
hundred denarii; and he seized him by the
throat and began to throttle him. 'Pay what
you owe me,' he said. His fellow servant fell
at his feet and implored him, saying, 'Give
me time and I will pay you.' But the other
would not agree; on the contrary, he had him
thrown into prison till he should pay the debt.
His fellow servants were deeply distressed
when they saw what had happened, and they
went to their master and reported the whole
affair to him. Then the master sent for him.
'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I cancelled all
that debt of yours when you appealed to me.

Were you not bound, then, to have pity on
your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?'
And in his anger the master handed him
over to the torturers till he should pay all his
debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will
deal with you unless you each forgive your
brother from your heart."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look with favour on our supplications, O Lord,
and in your kindness accept these, your
servants' offerings,
that what each has offered to the honour of
your name
may serve the salvation of all.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

How precious is your mercy, O God!
The children of men seek shelter in the
shadow of your wings.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the working of this heavenly gift, O Lord,
we pray,
take possession of our minds and bodies,
so that its effects, and not our own desires,
may always prevail in us.
Amen.

GOD WILL FORGIVE AS WE ...



Does God have feelings? The Bible is clear that God does, and in today's parable we have two emotions described.

The story sets out to tell us how God reacts to the same person, and God's attitude, that of the king, is determined by that of the individual portrayed in the character of the servant.

First of all, the king does not simply feel sorry for the servant who has accumulated a debt of such astronomical proportions that he has absolutely no hope of ever repaying it. After initially imposing a severe punishment of slavery on the whole family, the king's heart goes out to the servant when he appeals to him. He revokes the sentence and cancels the debt, which is now referred to as a *loan*.

However, the servant has learned nothing from his experience, and treats one of his colleagues in the way in which the master had treated him at first, and this over a paltry debt which the other could have repaid given time and patience. This attitude and behaviour causes the king to grow angry and to punish the servant severely.

Social justice and personal righteousness are themes running through the teaching of the prophets, John the Baptist and Jesus. If a person claims to be a member of the people of Israel or a disciple of Jesus, then their attitude must be that of the Lord they worship. The Lord is infuriated in the Hebrew Bible because the behaviour of the people of Israel does not reveal to others the God in whom they claim to believe. The Lord's name is profaned among the heathen nations, which is another way of saying that the Lord's reputation is brought into disrepute and made fun of because of people whose conduct does not suggest a God who is interested in right conduct towards others. The same can be said of Jesus and his followers, those who claim to be his disciples.

The lesson of our parable is that forgiveness should be the hallmark of the Christian, both as individuals and as a community. It is the refusal to forgive others, ignoring the fact that we ourselves have been forgiven, which will bring the wrath of God down on us. We have been warned. ■

DO

Harbouring resentment poisons the spirit. Is there some offence (real or imagined) which rankles at the back of your mind? Ask the Lord for the courage either to sort it out with the other person or to let it go. Remember the prayer, *forgive us our debts as we forgive those in debt to us*.

SAY

The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.

REFLECT

Forgive us our trespasses ... : if we were to take this to mean forgive us our debts in the same measure as we forgive those who are in debt to us, we might appreciate better the seriousness of what we are actually saying each time we use the Lord's Prayer. We are actually asking the Lord to use our own attitude to others to determine the Lord's attitude to ourselves. Scary stuff, is it not? Jesus' answer to Peter's question tells us that there should be no limit to our forgiving others, and the parable goes on to illustrate this. The sign of peace declares that we are indeed at peace with those with whom we celebrate the eucharist. ■

LEARN

The mention of seventy (or seven times seventy) recalls the boast of Lamech that he has been avenged disproportionately for an injury (Gen 4:24).

Matthew presents Jesus as reversing the boast of Lamech by saying that there should be no proportion or limit as far as forgiveness is concerned.

A talent is a very large amount of money, worth between six and ten thousand times a day's wages.

Under Jewish law, a wife could not be sold into slavery: by the time of Jesus neither could children.