

August 23, 2020: The 11th Sunday after Pentecost (The parable of the unforgiving servant)

Epistle: I Cor. 9:2-12:

If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35:



Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. "But that

servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

The parable of the unforgiving servant is teaching us about God's justice, mercy and forgiveness, on one hand, and the way we can benefit the most from His gifts and blessings, poured mercifully upon us, on the other hand.

When He began to settle accounts with the servant who owed Him ten thousand talents (an exorbitant amount of money), God showed His attribute as a just God: *But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.* Unable to pay his debt, and just about ready to lose everything, including his entire family and freedom, the servant resorts to the only other option available to him: he appeals to his Master's patience and mercy: *The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'*

Now, the parable is teaching us about God's compassion and mercy: *Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.*

It is interesting to note how quickly the Master (God) responded to the servant's humility and prayer (*"the servant therefore fell down before him.... have patience with me"*). Not only did He give the servant more time, but He forgave him the entire debt. This is what a compassionate and merciful God does to His servants.

The only problem is that we, the beneficiaries of God's forgiveness, mercy and compassion, fail to share these divine gifts and blessings with our fellow servants: *"and he laid hands on him" (his fellow servant) "and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' ... and he went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt."*

The moral of this parable is that unless we are willing to share with others the many blessings we receive from God, we will never fully enjoy those blessings: *"Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?"*

Not only that, but our egotistic way of using God's gifts can result in subjecting ourselves to His anger and the denial of our requests/prayers: *"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."*

Fr. George Bazgan

Sunday Service Attendance

Due to the continuing State of Emergency, which limits the number of people attending Church services, we are asking our members to make sure that, for time being, only 1 (one) person from each family attend our Sunday Divine Liturgy.

We apologize for this inconvenience and hope that the restrictions will continue to be relaxed in the near future.

Those who attend, are kindly asked to observe the recommendations of the experts, such as: washing their hands, social distancing, etc.

Thank you all and may God keep us safe!

MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Directors extends a warm appeal to all supporters of our parish, asking them to pay their membership as soon as possible.

This way we can ensure that we have the necessary funds to fulfill our financial obligations during the Summer months and for the rest of the year as well.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

CHURCH DIRECTORY PICK UP

The 2019 Church Directory is now available for those who participated in this project. If your family came to the Hall for a photography appointment or submitted your own family picture (for \$15), then you will receive a Directory.

Have a happy and safe Summer!

Prayer at the time of pandemic

O Lord, our God, who are rich in mercy and, with Your wise care, guard our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, stop this pandemic, as You have ceased the punishment of the people in the days of King David. You who are the Physician of our souls and our bodies, give healing to those contaminated with this disease, hastily raising them from their bed of suffering, to glorify You, the Most Merciful Savior, and protect those who are healthy from any disease.

Bless, strengthen and shield, O Lord, with Your grace, all those who, with love of people and sacrifice, care for the sick at their homes or in hospitals. Remove all disease and suffering from the people and teach us to value life and health as gifts coming from You.

Grant us, O God, Your peace, and fill our hearts with unwavering faith in Your protection, with hope in Your help, and with love towards You and our neighbor.

For Yours is to show mercy and to save us, O our God, and to You we give glorify: Father and Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!