

## Matthew 18:23-35

23 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

### Message

Gospel Basics (3)  
Living The Gospel of Mercy and Grace

### Opening & Intro:

We have been looking at some key words that make up the Gospel message – serving as building blocks. In two previous sermons we have looked firstly at God’s Love as Grace and then Sin and Salvation. Today’s message looks at living the Gospel of Mercy, Forgiveness and Grace



The parable we just heard is about God’s Kingdom economy of Mercy and Forgiveness and applies equally to Grace. The numbers tell a very frustrating story. The servant in view owes 10,000 Talents which is hard to relate to today’s Euro but easy to relate to the 100 Denari owed by the second servant if we understand that 1 Denarius was the going rate for a labourer’s day of work and a loaf of bread.

We know that one Talent was equal to 6000 Denari or 16 years work for a day labourer so 10,000 Talents = 60,000,000 Denari which took 160,000 years of work to earn.<sup>1</sup>

This is a story about Mercy and Forgiveness being given but then not extended or ‘paid onwards’. This tragedy leads us into the heart of what gospel living really involves and why this is sometimes frustrated. It points towards the pressing need to live the gospel of God’s Love, Mercy, Grace and Forgiveness from the heart which is what I want to speak about today.

Assuming you all believe the Gospel let’s ask some questions:

- Q:** What do we need to live the gospel of God’s Love and Grace?
- Q:** What does it take so as to bear Gospel fruit?

This parable of Jesus is going to be my way into those questions.

### Today’s Big Questions

- What do we need to live the Gospel of God’s Love and Grace?
- When does the Gospel become life changing?
- When may we see the power of this message in a person’s life?

<sup>1</sup> <http://text.watv.org/english/qna/view.html?idx=1573>

## Development

Let's now ask a key question to focus this:

- Q:** When does the Gospel of God's Love as Grace, and his Salvation in Jesus Christ become life changing so we can live it?  
**Q:** When do we see the power of this message taking hold in a person's life?

**Ans:** (short answer) We see the power of the Gospel when people believe it from their heart and faith operates.

When someone recognises their personal sin in whatever form, owns their need for forgiveness and then reaches out to receive the love of God as Mercy, Grace and Forgiveness we may expect to see the Gospel at work.

That is the breakthrough moment!

When someone entrusts their brokenness, with whatever manifestations of sin in pain, guilt and sickness and knows for themselves the Mercy, Grace and Love of God - that is the moment of spiritual impact. It imprints on the soul and begins the transformation of the heart. It's when our truth meets God's Spirit.

What I want to say today is that Gospel-living involves living out of that process, whether it's a sudden Damascus Road experience or a more gradual lifetime process.

Gospel-hearted people live out of that inner spring of life that begins when awareness and responsibility for Sin meet Mercy and Grace. That is the process of personal salvation. Unless our responsibility or acknowledgement for our sin meets the Love of God nothing changes and there is no sustaining spiritual basis for Gospel-living.

## Scripture

This is what Jesus' Parable of the unforgiving servant makes clear.

The Servant with 10,000 Talents worth of debt had a real issue, vastly beyond his ability to meet and settle.

The Master's natural recovery plan was to claw back what he could by selling the servant and his family as slaves.

The servant begged for mercy. The Master found Love in his heart and extended that in Mercy and Forgiveness. This was 10,000 Talents worth of Mercy simply out of the Love in his huge heart! It was an accounting exercise soaked in Grace.

So far so good - a magnificent story- but there is a snake in the grass!

The Master fully appreciates what has happened but the Servant does not. He has not understood this cancelling of his debts as grace and mercy. This is going to be a problem!

In my eyes the servant had received abundant mercy and forgiveness but he actually did not 'get it.' That is tragic and yet not unfamiliar, it happens in some people which is why Jesus speaks about it.

Because the Servant did not 'get it' he was not transformed to respond to the Master's awesome Love in showing Mercy and Forgiveness as he had received it. He did not even get a small 100 Denari worth of transforming mercy and grace!

This soon becomes obvious when he found a colleague who owed him 100 Denari and demanded immediate payment to the extent of choking him.

He who had received so much Mercy showed his fellow servant no Mercy and had him thrown in prison. Fellow servants and colleagues are deeply shocked. They tell the Master who is outraged. Jesus wants us to know this is how the Kingdom of God works:

<sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. <sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”



Jesus is setting out God’s Kingdom economy of Love and Justice, Mercy and Forgiveness. Quite simply: Mercy and Grace are available but if you don’t ‘get it’ and then live it you are in effect choosing for very tough justice –without Mercy.

What has been speaking to me out of this is the tragedy of how the Servant was not himself transformed by Mercy and Forgiveness. His accounts were cleared but he was not.

In Gospel terms nothing had happened in his heart and no Gospel-hearted transformation was at work.

So when an issue arose - as always happens - he had no Mercy or Forgiveness let alone Grace and Love to draw on and exercise.

However this servant presented or labelled himself, whatever sort of ‘servant’ he was, no Gospel had landed or taken root in him.

This is something Jesus spoke about elsewhere so we may be concerned.

Hear this from Matthew chapter 7.16-23

#### *A Tree and Its Fruit*

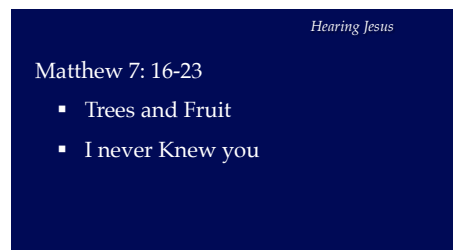
<sup>16</sup> You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

#### *I Never Knew You*

<sup>21</sup> ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

This is really important.

You can be a servant doing the work of the Lord, but unless He knows you on his terms, you will not produce the Gospel-hearted fruit he is looking for.



God seeks to know us through the Mercy, Grace and Forgiveness offered in Jesus Christ, presenting his Love to all who would receive it and be transformed by it to bear good Gospel fruit. God wants to know us through the cross of Jesus.

Without that heart level engagement, the desired Gospel-fruit does not come.  
Gospel people bear Gospel fruit.

Non-Gospel people, even God-fearing church-attending, spiritually-active, demon-busting people will not bear Gospel fruit and they will hear Jesus say:  
“I never knew you, depart from me.”

The Servant is representative of some people in churches so I am bringing this with some urgency. Meet God where he wants to be met in Spirit and in Truth so his Love, Mercy, Forgiveness and Grace can find us and transform our hearts to live out the Gospel.  
We may wonder why the Servant and some people today might not have ‘got it’?  
What might be at play here? I’ll share some possibilities:

1. Lack of Responsibility.

It takes character to own responsibility for a mess. 10,000 Talents is a lot of mess. Not everyone has the courage or the character to own that. Instead of taking full responsibility the fall-back is to make excuses or shift some blame on to others. Such denial prevents us from really engaging the Mercy, Forgiveness and Grace of God.

2. Sense of Entitlement.

Some people expect to be rescued from themselves as of right or entitlement. This may be culturally influenced or thought of as earned. Mercy and Grace are made cheap to them so are not respected or valued. It can look like presumed universalism.

We tell a Gospel of God’s life poured out for our redemption on a bloody cross. If that is taken lightly or considered as some normal entitlement it will not transform the heart and mind towards gospel living.

3. Hard-heartedness

This is the very problem the Gospel of Mercy and Grace was meant to overcome.

4. Pride

We all know that one!

### **Summary and Conclusion**

To be a Gospel Church we need to be a Gospel People. I can preach it in Word and Sacrament but we all need to live it. That is what discipleship is all about - learning to live this Gospel the way Jesus calls for. That is what sets up the priesthood of all believers.

People impacted, confronted and cut by the Gospel featuring the cross will connect with God’s Mercy, Forgiveness and Love. It will transform us.

I’ll end with a brief passage about a moment when Peter was impacted by the grace and mercy of God in Jesus. It happened on his fishing boat after they had caught many fish by casting nets where Jesus had told them to: (Luke 5:8-11)

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,<sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."<sup>11</sup> And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

*Peter's Moment*

Luke 5: 8-11

"Depart from me,  
for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Peter was undone and flipped by God's Grace to him in Jesus. This was a big step towards knowing and being known in Grace, Mercy and Love. He was now ready to learn the Gospel way of life.

I'll leave you with a screen that sums up where we need to stand of we are going to live this Gospel life of Mercy, Grace and Love:

**In and of myself I am more sinful than I ever dared to believe, but in Christ I am more loved than I ever dared to hope.**

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