

Sermon Notes on Mt. 18:23-35, Trinity XXII

1. At Lk. 6:36 Jesus says: "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." Vs. 33 of our text contains the verb "to be merciful" twice. The wicked servant had no mercy. The sinful flesh of all human beings, also that of Christians, is merciless. When Christians fall from the faith they show their true merciless condition. Think of Cain, Saul and Judas.
2. Note the adverb "as" in vs. 33. It reminds us of the same word at Mt. 6:12: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This does not denote amount but spirit and attitude.
3. *times* Scholars have computed that the wicked servant was forgiven 600,000 more than what was owed by the fellow servant. God has forgiven us infinitely more than our neighbor owes us.
4. Mercy is an attitude of love and forgiveness toward someone who is miserable and undeserving. When David confessed his sin with Bathsheba he cried: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness." Ps. 51:5. When Paul acknowledged himself to be the chief of sinners, he added: "However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering." I Tim. 1:16. Many times in the OT we read: "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good because His mercy endures forever!" Ps. 118:1. In what sense is He "good"? His mercy endures forever. Tit. 3:5 reads: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Holy baptism is a constant and enduring covenant of God's mercy which forgives our many, many sins.
5. In vs. 21 Peter had asked Jesus: "How often should I forgive my brother who sins against me?" Jesus' answer says: "There should be no limit to your forgiveness." In vs. 21 Jesus is speaking about a penitent sinner, a person who commits many sins of weakness. In vss. 15-18 Jesus had spoken of an impenitent sinner. Neither God nor the Christian should forgive an impenitent sinner. His impenitence keeps an impenitent sinner from being forgiven. In vss. 26-27 the wicked servant at first is penitent, confessing and begging for mercy. But in vss. 28-34 the wicked servant became impenitent. His fellow servants grieved over his impenitence. And the Lord refused to forgive his debt.
6. At Jn. 5:14 Jesus said to the healed man: "Look, you've been made well. Sin no more lest a worse thing come on you." Doesn't a Christian sin daily? Of course he does. But he does not sin willingly. He repents and cries for mercy. And he shows mercy to other sinners. At Gal. 5:21 after Paul had listed the sins of the flesh, he says: "People who constantly do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God." Christians do occasionally commit these sins, but not deliberately. Christians grieve over the sins they commit unwillingly. That is why St. Paul says: "Let not sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." Rom. 6:12. And at Eph. 4:26: "Let not the sun go down on your wrath." Don't bear a grudge. Don't let sin rule over you. Don't become merciless like the wicked servant who refused to forgive his fellow servant a small debt.
7. People sometimes say: "I'll forgive but I won't forget." That is very, very dangerous. When God forgives us for Jesus' sake, does He forget? Surely He does. At Jer. 31:34 God says: "I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more." At Ps. 25:7 David prays: "Do not remember the sins of my youth." When God forgives, He forgets even though, like David, we remember the sins of our youth and therefore beg God not to remember our sins.
8. Can a Christian fall from the faith and lose his soul? Yes. That is why Paul warns us: "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." I Cor. 10:12. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinful being!

Sermon Outline on Mt. 18:23-35, Trinity XXII

Theme: THE NECESSITY OF BEING MERCIFUL

Introduction: God says in vs. 33 of our text: "Was it not necessary for you to have mercy on your fellow servant just as I had mercy on you?" Mercy is necessary for me. I can be saved in no other way. Mercy is necessary also for my fellowman. He can be loved in no other way. If I refuse to show mercy I cut myself off from God's mercy and I am loveless toward my neighbor. That is what our text is saying.

I-THE NECESSITY OF MERCY FOR MYSELF

A-Sinful man is totally helpless and lost without mercy. This thought, like a golden thread, is found throughout the Bible. Tit. 3:5 says it very well: "Not by works in righteousness which we have done but by his mercy He has saved us." When David committed adultery but was forgiven he exclaimed: "Have mercy upon me, Oh God!" Ps. 51:1. After Paul called himself the chief of sinners he said: "For this reason God had mercy on me so that in me first of all Christ Jesus might exhibit His longsuffering as a pattern for those who will believe in Him for life eternal." Until the end of the world Paul will serve as a model for all sinners who cannot save themselves by their works but on whom Christ Jesus has had mercy. How often don't we read in the Gospels about people who said to Jesus: "Lord, have mercy on me!" How often don't we repeat this sentence. Sinful man cannot be helped without God's mercy.

B-The Triune God is a God of mercy. About twelve times in the OT we read: "Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good because His mercy endures forever." Ps. 118:1. He is a merciful God in Christ Jesus. And that mercy is endless. That's the way He is pictured in our text. He decided to take accounts with His servants. One was brought before Him who owed Him ten thousand talents, a huge amount. He could not pay. He deserved to be sold with his household as a slave. But he begged for mercy. The Lord had mercy on him and forgave his entire debt. That is the true picture of God toward all mankind. His mercies in Christ Jesus are new every morning. They endure forever. He forgives His children daily, weekly, monthly, annually, all their life.

II-THE NECESSITY OF MERCY FOR MY NEIGHBOR

A-My neighbor is as sinful and helpless as I am. In Adam all have sinned and therefore do now fall short of the glory of God. Rom. 3:22. But there is a difference. My neighbor owes me far, far less than I owe God. In our text the comparative debts were ten thousand talents compared to one hundred denaria. When we pray: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who sin against us" we are not comparing amounts but rather attitude. I owe God much, much more than my neighbor owes me. But I should have the same attitude toward him that God has toward me. Just as God has mercifully forgiven me in Christ Jesus, so I must mercifully forgive my neighbor. In Christ God forgives and forgets. Jer. 31:34. He does not remember the sins of my youth. Ps. 25:7.

B-The danger of being merciless toward my neighbor. If and when I refuse to forgive my neighbor two things happen: I become offensive to my fellow-Christians as the parable plainly shows and, secondly, I bring the just judgment of God down on myself. If I refuse to forgive my neighbor, all my debts come back again and I become liable. Mercy has come to an end. Those who refuse to forgive their fellowman bring the mercy of the Lord to an end and, unless they repent, will be forever banished from the presence of the Lord. II Thess. 1:8-9. They will be thrown into outer darkness where there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Conclusion: We have many sins to confess. Included in these sins are the times when we refused to forgive our neighbor. Lord, have mercy on us! Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Sermon Outline on Mk. 4:21-25, Trinity XXII

Theme: WHAT GOD DESIRES FOR US

Introduction: Jesus is called the Word. He reveals God to us. Jn. 1:18; 14:6. God's Word made us. Ps. 33:6.9. His Word enlightens us. Ps. 119:105. His Word gives us eternal life. Jn. 6:68. Therefore, God desires that we see the Truth in His Word. He wants us to hear His Word correctly. And He wants to bless us through that Word. That's what our text is talking about.

I-HE DESIRES THAT WE CLEARLY KNOW THE TRUTH.

A-Do not hide the Truth. Vs. 21 reads: "A lamp is not brought in to be placed under a vessel or under a bed. Isn't it brought in to be placed on a lampstand?" Jesus wants His Word to shine brightly as does a lamp in a dark room. Unless people have light in a dark room they are at a loss as to what to do. Likewise, unless we see the meaning of God's Word clearly, we will wander about aimlessly. That's why Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me and I give to them eternal life. They will never perish and no one will ever take them from My Father's hand." Jn. 10:27-28.

B-Only God can make the Truth plain. Vss. 22-23 read: "A thing is not hidden except in order to be made plain nor is a thing hidden except in order to be made plain." Natural man, lost in sin and death, cannot know Truth on his own. "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God." I Cor. 2:14. But "God has revealed them to us through His Spirit." I Cor. 2:10. God has hidden the Truth in order to reveal it. Read Eph. 3:3-6. For ages God had hidden the mission to the Gentiles from man. But, through the apostles God revealed it. God revealed this Truth to Peter. Acts 10 and 11. Only God reveals Truth.

II-GOD WANTS US TO HEAR HIS WORD CORRECTLY

A-"He who has ears to hear let him hear." Vs. 23. Hebr. 1:1 tells us that in the O.T. God spoke in various ways to man but now He speaks to man only through His Son. Several times the Father said: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. You hear Him." Deut. 18:15; Lk. 9:35. And Rom. 10:17 assures us that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. A faithful child listens to its parents. Likewise, a true Christian uses his ears for hearing the Lord's Word.

B-"Be careful what you hear." Vs. 24. At Lk. 8:18 Jesus said: "Take care how you hear." I Jn. 4:1 says "Many false prophets have gone out into the world." Jesus said "Many will come in My name saying 'I am the Christ' and they will deceive many." Mt. 24:5. St. Paul warned the pastors at Miletus: "I know that after I leave grievous wolves will enter your number not sparing the flock and from your midst men will arise speaking perverse things to draw disciples after them." Acts 20:29-30. Be careful what you hear. Test what you hear with the Word of God.

III-GOD DESIRES TO BLESS US THROUGH HIS WORD

A-You will be blessed according to how you hear. Vs. 24. In fact, the text says that God will add to it. That's what He said at Lk. 11:28: "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and observe it." Samuel heard the Word of the Lord. Abraham heard the Word of the Lord. Paul heard the Word of the Lord. All were abundantly blessed.

B-He who has will receive and he who has not will lose all. That's another way of saying "Be faithful to death and I will give you the crown of life." Rev. 2:10. Or "He that believes and is baptized will be saved. He who believes not will be damned." Mk. 16:16. To those who have He will say "Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom." But to those who have not He will say "Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity."

Conclusion: Today is the day of salvation. Today is the time to prepare for the rest of your life.

1. In Mark this text is preceded by the Parable of the Sower and is followed by the Parable of the man who sowed seed in his field. Its parallel is found at Lk. 8:16-18 where it is preceded by the parable of the sower. Therefore, our text and Lk. 8:16-18 have the same meaning.
2. Jesus' parables reveal the truth to believers but conceal the truth to those who resist God's Word. See Mk. 4:10-12. For example, when we hear about the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32) they rejoice over the repentance of sinners. But unbelievers might say: "I want nothing to do with a God who treats a scoundrel that way." However, even though parables reveal the truth, sometimes Christians need to hear the correct interpretation of the parable. Even the disciples required an explanation of the Parable of the Sower, Mk. 4:13-20. But they did not resist the Word. They believed what Christ said. Our text teaches us to teach God's Word correctly and to hear it diligently.
3. Vs. 21: When a lamp is lit it is not placed under a basket or bed. No. It is placed on the lampstand to serve its purpose. Here and in Lk. 8:16 it means: "Do not hide the clear meaning of God's Word. Let it shine with all its brilliance." In Mt. 5:15 it has a different meaning. Read Mt. 5:14-16. There it means: "Let your life be a shining light." In Lk. 11:33 it means: "That Christ is the Savior is as clear as the light of a lamp. Do not hide that light."
4. Mk. 4:22 means: "God purposely hid something in order to reveal it." A good example is Eph. 3:3-6. That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews was hidden for ages but was revealed in the Gospel. In Mt. 10:26 it means: "Do not fear those who call Christ a devil. The hidden truth about Christ's identity will be revealed. Fear not." In *it* Lk. 12:2 is a warning not to partake of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees but rather to speak the Gospel publicly. Only the Gospel can save man. In Hebrew, Mk. 4:22 is called a "mashal". That means "rule of life" or "proverb." Without the Holy Spirit the meaning of God's Word is hidden. But the Holy Spirit brings the hidden to light. For the believer, Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God. I Cor. 1:23-25. But to the Jews it is a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. He is speaking of the Jews and Greeks who resist God's Word.
5. Vs. 23 is found frequently in Jesus' mouth in the Gospels. God's Word is not entertainment. It is not of human origin. It is the Truth. It is not a toy. Christ and His Word are the aroma of death to resisters but the aroma of life to the believers. II Cor. 2:14-16.
6. Vs. 24: Here Jesus says: "Take care WHAT you hear." At Lk. 8:18 Jesus says: "Take care HOW you hear." The meaning is essentially the same. WHAT and HOW we hear are important. It means: "Listen to the Holy Spirit not your own sinful ideas. Listen carefully and do not let Satan take the Word from you." This is followed by another mashal: "With the measure with which you measure it will be measured to you and it will be added to you." This contains a warning and a promise. Don't expect to be blessed unless you are diligent. And diligence will be richly rewarded. This mashal is found also at Mt. 7:2 and Lk. 6:38.
7. This mashal explains the mashal in vs. 24. At Mt. 25:29 and Lk. 19:26 this mashal is found with reference to the final judgment before God's throne. In our text Jesus is speaking about what happens in this life. It is paradoxical. One would not have expected this truth. A good example of this is the love of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The more you give it to people, the more you have. But in our text Jesus is speaking about an attitude to the Word of God and our attitude to those who teach and preach this Word of God. The more we correctly hear and understand, the more He blesses us. But the less we correctly hear and understand, the less He blesses us. Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and observe it. Lk. 11:28.