



My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This Sunday's Parable from the Gospel of Matthew contains an important lesson for all of us, if we are truly to unite ourselves to our Creator and to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Lord tells us of a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he approached a servant to whom he had loaned 10,000 talents, and that servant could not pay him, the king ordered that he should be sent into debtor's prison along with his wife, children, and all his possessions. The servant fell at his master's feet, begging for time, and so the king showed him mercy. However, this same servant later approached one of his coworkers, who owed him 100 denarii. When his fellow servant also begged for the same mercy, the Wicked Servant refused and had him thrown into prison.

Other servants saw this, and they reported the Wicked Servant to the King. Naturally, the King was furious, and when he summoned the servant who owed him 10,000 talents, he said, *'You wicked servant! I forgave*

you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' (Matthew 18:32-33) Christ finishes this parable by explaining that the Wicked Servant's punishment (with the prison as a symbol for Hades) will befall us too, *"if you do not forgive your brother from your heart"* (Matthew 18:35).

There are a few details we can examine to show the Wicked Servant's hardness of heart. In saying the Wicked Servant owed 10,000 talents, the Lord is exaggerating. If we begin with the understanding that a denarius was the daily wage of a worker, and that one single talent could equal up 10,000 denarii, we understand the Wicked Servant's trouble: he must work for 200,000 years to repay everything! By comparison, the fellow Servant's 100 denarii is a very small amount. Also, remember that nowhere in the Bible is prison spoken of as a punishment for debt. Our Lord is instead using the language of Roman law to demonstrate that unlike the legalistic spirit of the pagans, even as sinful beings, we can hope only for God's mercy to save us.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, as we prepare to celebrate the Feast of the Dormition this Saturday, let us not be like the Wicked Servant. Let us instead use the humility of the Virgin Mary as an example, so that we may be able to soften our imperfect human hearts, willingly forgiving our brothers and sisters for the wrongs they have done to us. Only when we practice the acceptance shown by the Theotokos, all the days of her life, will we truly imitate the perfectness of our Father who is in Heaven. My best wishes for many more years, especially for Marias, Panagiotis, Panagiotas, and all who celebrate!

+SEVASTIANOS
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