



74th Year

August 16, 2026

Pamphlet #33 (3820)

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Matthew 18:23-35)

Forbearance and harshness

The Lord said this parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, '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?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the torturers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

THE INFINITE SEA OF GOD'S LOVE FOR HUMANITY

Just yesterday we celebrated the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, a feast which we believers honor as the passage of the Virgin Mary into true Life. We also confessed that through her intercessions we are delivered “from death,” from the death of sin, of ignorance and forgetfulness of God, of egotism, and of the lack of true love.

Today's Gospel reading, proclaimed during the Divine Liturgy, refers to the supreme evangelical virtue of love, from which, as from a root, all gifts and every virtue spring forth. It is the Parable of the Ten Thousand Talents, which presents in the most striking way both the love of God, who never ceases to forgive everyone, and His righteous anger, through which He instructs man so that, with the grace of Christ, people may strive to conform their lives, character, and actions to the holy commandments. These commandments ultimately reveal to us the Lord of Glory Himself.

Debtors before God

“Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother if he continues to wrong me? Up to seven times?” This question of the Apostle Peter gave Christ the occasion to narrate today's parable. The usual limit among the Jews was to forgive up to three times. Peter, by saying “up to seven times,” perhaps expressed a more lenient view. But Christ's answer overturned the religious and social assumptions of His time: “I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” That is, not merely seven times, but seventy times seven – in other words, without limit.

In our passage we observe two striking contrasts, which we shall consider in order to understand its spiritual meaning more deeply. The first contrast is seen in the difference between the debts. The first servant in the story owed his master an

enormous sum of money, one that it was impossible for him to repay. He then begged his master, with contrition, to be long-suffering and merciful toward him. The master took pity on him and not only refrained from imprisoning him, but also set him free and forgave his debt. The second contrast is found in the foolishness of this same servant. Without having learned or been chastened by his master's philanthropy, when he met a fellow servant who owed him some insignificant amount of money, he began to demand payment harshly and violently. He even went so far as to have him thrown into prison, depriving him of his freedom. And here we may observe what ultimate ingratitude means! God, the Lord of all, in His compassion and ineffable love, forgives the sins of people. Yet a person with a hardened heart and a calloused conscience does not forgive his fellow man; he shows him no mercy. It is precisely on this observation that the meaning of the passage is centered.

A new perspective on human relationships

The struggle of every truly faithful person to live according to the Gospel of Christ has two dimensions: the vertical dimension, which concerns one's relationship with God, and the horizontal dimension, which concerns one's relationship with one's fellow man. Therefore, a Christian's relationship with God cannot be independent of his relationship with other people. In practical terms, this means that when the spirituality of the believer and his communion with God is not reflected in a proper relationship with his fellow man and is not embodied in love, understanding, and forgiveness, then it is not genuine; it suffers from hypocrisy and double-mindedness. In the end, the believer deceives only himself.

Acquiring a merciful heart

A person who realizes that his sins, mistakes, and shortcomings before God are impossible to "repay" by his own

efforts, and that they are instead forgiven through the infinite philanthropy of God, cannot help but show the same attitude toward other people. This is what it means for a believer to acquire the “the same ethos of God,” as Saint Ignatius the God-Bearer writes. The power and truth of forgiveness, with which you embrace your fellow man, speak directly to his heart, and then miracles and transformations take place. For it is not naïveté to forgive; it is a privilege! It means doing what God Himself does. Certainly, evil, wrongdoing, and sin do not cease to have their negative consequences. Yet forgiveness and love are greater than these things, just as the love of God and the forgiveness that He continually offers us are greater.

Archimandrite N. K.

August 16, 2026: Sunday After the Feast of the Dormition

Translation of the Holy Mandylion from Edessa (944);
Martyr Diomedes († 298); Timothy, Bishop of Euripus († 1578);
Gerasimos of Cephalonia († 1579); Neomartyrs Apostolos († 1680) and
Stamatis; The Six Martyrs of Megara; Saint Acacius;
Venerable Joseph the Hesychast († 1959).

2nd Tone – Eothinon: 11 – Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:2-12
– Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35

NEXT SUNDAY: August 23, 12th Sunday of Matthew
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 – Gospel: Matthew 19:16-26

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VOICE OF THE LORD, a weekly pamphlet of Orthodox faith and life of the "Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece". Iasiou 1, 115 21 Athens. Publisher – Director: Metropolitan of Phanariou, Agathangelos. Editorial office, tel. 210.7272.331. Processing, tel. 210.7272.388. Through the holy churches, it is distributed free of charge. From the Printing Office of the Apostolic Ministry.

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