

A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by St. Augustine ¹

The Lord puts the parable of the unforgiving debtor before us that we may learn from it. He has no desire for us to die, so he warns us: *This is how your heavenly Father will deal with you if you, any of you, fail to forgive your brother or sister from your heart.*

Take notice now, for clearly this is no idle warning. The fulfillment of this command calls for the most vigorous obedience. We are all in debt to God, just as other people are in debt to us. Is there anyone who is not God's debtor? Only a person in whom no sin can be found. And is there anyone who has no brother or sister in his debt? Only if there be someone who has never suffered any wrong. Do you think anyone can be found in the entire human race who has not in turn wronged another in some way, incurring a debt to that person? No, all are debtors, and have others in debt to them. Accordingly, God who is just has told you how to treat your debtor, because he means to treat his in the same way.

There are two works of mercy which will set us free. They are briefly set down in the gospel in the Lord's own words: *Forgive and you will be forgiven*, and *Give and you will receive*. The former concerns pardon, and the latter generosity. As regards pardon he says: Just as you want to be forgiven, so someone is in need of your forgiveness." Again, as regards generosity, consider when a beggar asks you for something that you are a beggar too in relation to God. When we pray, we are all beggars before God. We are standing at the door of a great householder, or rather, lying prostrate, and begging with tears, We are longing to receive a gift – the gift of God Himself.

What does a beggar ask of you? Bread. And you, what do you ask of God, if not Christ who said: *I am the living bread, that has come down from heaven?* Do you want to be pardoned? Then pardon others. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Do you want to receive? Give and you will receive.

If we think of our sins, reckoning those we have committed by sight, hearing, thought, and countless disorderly emotions, I do not know whether we can even sleep without falling into debt. And so, every day we

¹ Journey with the Fathers 0 Year A – New City Press = NY – 1999 – pg 134

pray, every day we beat on God's ears with our pleas; every day we prostrate ourselves before him, saying" *Forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us.* Which of our trespasses, all of them or only some? All, you will answer. Do likewise, therefore, with those who have offended you. This is the rule you have laid down for yourself, the condition you have stipulated. When you pray When you pray according to this pact and covenant you remember to say: *Forgive us, as we also forgive our debtors.*

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09/14/20

The Triumph of the Cross: a reading from a treatise by St. John Chrysostom.¹

Isaiah made it clear that Christ will raise up all men when he said: “The dead shall be raised up again, even those in the tombs shall be raised up. For the dew from you is healing for them.” That was not all. After his cross, after his slaughter, his glory will shine forth more brightly; after his resurrection, he will advance the message of his Gospel still more.

He was bound, betrayed by an apostle, spat upon, outraged with insults, scourged, nailed to the cross, and, as far as [some] were concerned, he did not deserve to be buried in a tomb. His executioners divided his garments. They suspected that he aspired to be a king, and he died for it. “For everyone who makes himself king, sets himself against Caesar.” They suspected him of blasphemy, and he died for it. “Behold, you have heard his blasphemy.”

Even though he would undergo all these torments, he roused up those who would listen, he stirred them to courage by saying: “Do not be afraid because of these things which they did to me. I was crucified, I was scourged, I was outraged and insulted by robbers, I was arrested on suspicion of blasphemy and of being a king. But after my death and resurrection, people will look on my sufferings in such a way that no one will say that they were not filled with abundant value and honor.”

Certainly, this did come to pass. And a prophet predicted it long beforehand when he said: “There shall be the root of Jesse, even he who rises up to rule nations. In him nations will put their trust, and his resting place shall be glorious.” This kind of death is more glorious than a crown. Certainly, kings have laid aside their crowns and taken up the cross, the symbol of his death. On their purple robes is the cross, on their crowns is the cross, at their public prayers is the cross, on their weapons is the cross, on the sacred table of their altar is the cross. Everywhere in the world, the cross shines forth more brightly than the sun. As it says in the Scriptures: “And his resting place shall be glorious.”

¹ *Demonstration Against the Pagans That Christ is God*. Trans. Paul W. Harkins, Fathers of the Church Series, vol. 73. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985. pp.221ff.

In human affairs things do not generally happen that way. Men of distinction flourish while they are alive; after they die, their exploits are reduced to nothing. Anyone could see how true this is not only in the case of the wealthy and rulers but even in the case of the emperor himself. Their laws are abrogated, their images are obscured, people's memory of them is blotted out, their name is forgotten, those who enjoyed their favor are held in scorn. This is the lot even of those emperors who waged wars, of those who, by their nod, changed the conditions of peoples, cities, and affairs, of those who had the power to put men to death, of those who could give a reprieve to men on their way to execution. But all their great powers have perished despite the great honors shown to them while they were alive.

With Christ it is quite the opposite. Before the cross, his situation was one of shame and dejection. Judas betrayed him, Peter denied him, the others fled. He stood alone and was led off in the midst of his foes; many who had believed in him now deserted him. But after he had died on the cross, his situation was not destroyed but became brighter, more glorious, and more sublime. From this you may understand that the crucified one was no mere man.

09SN1503

09.15.20

From a Sermon in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Amadeus of Lusanne (CF 18:105-106)

With deep calling to deep, two loves had come together into one and from the two loves was made a single love when the Virgin mother gave to her Son the love she gave to God, and showed her love for her son in loving God. Therefore the more she loved, the more she grieved and the greatness of her love brought the increase of her suffering.

What was she doing when she stood on Calvary and saw the cross, the nails, the wounds of the One who was dying in innocence and the insatiable cruelty of the Pharisee afire with malice? [Jesus] hung there atoning not for his sins but for ours, and the Pharisees with the Scribes, mocking him, struck him on the head and offered to his lips vinegar mingled with gall that there might be fulfilled the prophecy of David, saying in the person of Christ, 'They added to the pain of my wounds.' In the midst of this the Mother of God was distressed in mind, and sorrows seized upon her as upon a woman in childbirth. There are groans, sobs, sighs, sorrow, grief, agony, distress of heart, fires, a death more cruel than death. There life is not taken away yet the bitterness of death is suffered. O memory to be revered, full of devotion and tears, to recall how that glorious holy soul suffered, and what anguish she endured in the death of Christ. The pale face of Jesus reflected the bloodless face of his mother. He suffered in the flesh, she in her heart. Finally the insults and scoffing of the wicked came back upon his mother's head. The Lord's death was to her more bitter than her own [would have been]. Although, taught by the Spirit, she would not doubt the resurrection, yet she had to drink the Father's cup and to know the hour of her own passion. Concerning this, the venerable Simeon prophesied to her: 'A sword shall pierce your soul.' O Lord Jesus, terrible in your counsels beyond the sons of men, you did not spare your mother from the sword piercing her soul. By this road must we all pass by the fiery sword turning this way and that to the tree of life which is in the midst of paradise.

But to return: Blessed Mary was able to cry out that which was especially appropriate to Christ: 'O all you who pass by, behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow. What a sorrow and how great! And in that sorrow what was Mary like? Alas, as she was then, how different from the girl who had once tended her son amid a choir of angels while shepherds worshiped and Magi adored him with an offering of mystic gifts. Very different, not indeed in virtue but in sadness, not in grace but in grief. For she increased in virtue and grew in grace. For set in the midst of adversity she neither relaxed her modesty nor lost the strength of her constancy.

09SN1602

09.16.20

From a letter by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr ²

Cyprian sends greetings to his brother Cornelius. My very dear brother, we have heard of the glorious witness given by your courageous faith. On learning of the honor you had won by your witness, we were filled with such joy that we felt ourselves sharers and companions in your praiseworthy achievements. After all, we have the same Church, the same mind. The same unbroken harmony. Why then should a priest not take pride in the praise given to a fellow priest as though it were given to him? What brotherhood fails to rejoice in the happiness of its brothers wherever they are?

Words cannot express how great was the exaltation and delight here when we heard of your good fortune and brave deeds: how you stood out as a leader of your brothers in their declaration of faith, while the leader's confession was enhanced as they declared their faith. You led the way to glory, but you gained many companions in that glory; being foremost in your readiness to bear witness on behalf of all, you prevailed on your people to become a single witness. We cannot decide which we ought to praise, your own ready and unshaken faith or the love of your brothers who would not leave you. While the courage of the bishop who thus led the way has been demonstrated, at the same time the unity of the brotherhood who followed has been manifested. Since you have one heart and one voice, it is the Roman Church as a whole that has thus borne witness.

Dearest brother, bright and shining is the faith which the blessed Apostle praised in your community. He foresaw in the spirit the praise your courage deserves and the strength that could not be broke,; he was heralding the future when he testified to your achievements; his praise of the fathers was a challenge to the sons. Your unity, your strength have become shining examples of these virtues to the rest of the brethren.

Divine providence has now prepared us. God's merciful design has warned us that the day of our own struggle, our own contest, is at hand. By that shared love which binds us closely together, we are doing all we can to exhort our congregation, to give ourselves unceasingly to fastings, vigils and prayers in common. These are the heavenly weapons which give us strength to stand firm and endure; they are the spiritual defenses, the God-given armaments that protect us.

² The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1975 – p 1406

Let us then remember one another, united in mind and heart. Let us pray without ceasing, you for us, we for you; by the love we share we shall thus relieve the strain of these great trials.

OT-JUG11
09.17.20

A Commentary on the Book of Judges by St. Ambrose ³

The Levite set out on his journey in happy spirits because he had recovered his dearly beloved wife. As the day was already declining they sped on their way with swift steps. The woman rode on an ass; her husband felt no weariness, taking joy in his desire and lightening his journey with talk at times with the woman., at times with the slave. When at length they neared Jerusalem. about thirty stades away. The servant boy suggested that they turn into the city, since night makes even safe places suspect and one must guard against the uncertainties if darkness, and particularly since the inhabitants of that locality were not of the children of Israel. But his master did not care for the servant's odea of seeking lodging among foreigners, since Gaba and Rama, cities of Benjamin, were not far distant. His strong will overcame the servant's suggestion, as though advice takes its value from one's condition of birth rather than that through advice a lowly condition may be raised.. The sun was now setting and he agreed reluctantly to go into the city, for he was overtaken by evening. The Gabanites lived there, unfriendly, harsh, unbearable people, who could stand anything but to receive people hospitably and provide an inn. And when he sat on the road imploring the mercy of these strangers, an old man from the field happened to stumble on them, for evening had compelled him tp leave his work in the fields for the night. Seeing him, he asked where he was from and where he was going. He answered: "I came from Bethlehem of Judah. I am going to Mount Ephrem, and my wife is here with me. But I have learned that there is no one here to give hospitality and provide us a place of rest. He needed no food or drink for himself nor food for his flock, but they had been refused the hospitality of shelter. They had everything, only a bare lodging was needed. To this the old man kindly and calmly said: "Peace to you! Come in as my guest and fellow citizen for I am also from the region of Moint Ephrem, and there is a lodging place; someone who lived here a long time laid its foundations." Having received them into his home, he attentively and carefully provided for his guests and entertained them.

³ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture = O.T. IV = InterVarsity Press = D0owners Grove, IL – 2005 – pg 171-

OT-JUG12
09.18.20

A Commentary on the Book of Judges by St. Athanasius ⁴

I have thought it good to remind you of a history out of the Scriptures. It happened that a certain Levite was injured in the person of his wife and when he considered the exceeding greatness of the pollution (for the woman was a Hebrew and of the tribe of Judah) being astounded at the outrage which had been committed against him, he divided his wife's body as the holy Scripture relates in the Book of Judges, and sent a part of it to each tribe in Israel, in order that it might be understood that an injury like this pertained not to himself only, but extended to all alike; and that if the people sympathized with him in his sufferings, they might avenge him; or if they neglected to do so, might bear the disgrace of being considered thenceforth as themselves guilty of the wrong. The messengers whom he sent related what had happened; and they that heard it and saw it, declared that such things had never been done from the day that the children of Israel came up out of Egypt. So every tribe of Israel was moved and all came together against the sufferers; and at last the perpetrators of this iniquity were destroyed in war and became a curse in the mouths of all: for the assembled people considered not their kindred blood but regarded only the crime which they had committed.

For my object in reminding you of this history is this, that you may compare those ancient transactions with what has happened to us now, and perceiving how much these last exceed the other in cruelty, may be filled with greater indignation on account of them.

⁴ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. IV – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2005 – pg 173

OT-JUG13
09.19.20

A Commentary on the Book of Judges by St. Ambrose⁵

When what had happened to the concubine became known, almost all the people of Israel broke out into war. The war remained doubtful with an uncertain issue; but in the third engagement the people of Benjamin were delivered to the people of Israel, and being condemned by the divine judgment, they paid the penalty for their widely immoral behavior.

And when at first the people of Israel were defeated, yet unmoved by fear at the reverses of the war, they disregarded the sorrow the avenging of chastity cost them. They rushed into battle ready to wash with their own blood the stain of the crime that had been committed.

Our ancestors did not think chastity to be despised; rather they showed it such reverence that they waged war on violators of modesty. In fact, so great was their desire for revenge that all the tribe of Benjamin would have been destroyed unless the six hundred that remained out of the war had been protected by a natural hill.

⁵ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. IV – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2005
pg 176