

**THEME: THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

**TOPIC: THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT**

**TEXT: MATTHEW 18:21-35**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In our study to date on "**The Parables of Jesus**" our discussion has been centred on the kingdom of heaven itself.

- a. How the "seed" of the kingdom would be received as in the ("**The Sower**")
- b. Its mixed character and future consummation ("**The Wheat and the Tares**")
- c. Its growth and development ("**The Mustard Seed**", "**The Leaven**")
- d. Its exceeding value ("**The Hidden Treasure**", "**The Pearl of Great Price**")

In our study today, the parable under consideration describes "the character of the citizens" who are to make up the kingdom.

- a. It is commonly called "**The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant**"
- b. It is recorded in **Mt 18:21-35**

## **I. THE PARABLE AND ITS MESSAGE**

### **A. THE OCCASION WHICH LED TO ITS TELLING.**

1. Peter's question about forgiving a brother – **Matthew 18:21**
  - a. He probably thought he was being very gracious
  - b. For many Jewish rabbis taught that three (3) times was sufficient.
2. Jesus' initial response to Peter's question – **Matthew 18:22**
  - a. His answer is not to be taken literally
  - b. Rather, "**Jesus confronts Peter with the truth that the spirit of forgiveness knows no boundaries.**"
3. To reinforce His point, Jesus proceeds to tell the parable.

### **B. THE PARABLE ITSELF EXPAINED.**

1. A king shows mercy to his servant by cancelling his huge debt – **Matthew 18:23-27**
  - a. How large an amount was 10,000 talents?
    - "**If the Attic talent is intended, about 6,000 denarii were involved in just one Attic talent.**" (The Attic talent (a talent of the Attic standard), also known as the Athenian talent or Greek talent (Greek: τάλαντον, talanton), is an ancient unit of weight)
    - "**Remembering that a denarius was a day's normal wage the poor fellow owed something like 60,000,000 denarii.**"
    - Using the rate of \$50 as one day's wage, the amount would be \$3,000,000,000 (3 billion dollars!)
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- b. The mercy of the king goes beyond the actual request
    - The request was for patience to pay the debt.
    - Yet the king was willing to forgive the debt entirely!
- 2. That servant in turn then refuses to cancel a fellow servant's petty debt – **Matt. 18:28-30**
  - a. How much was a hundred denarii?
    - Remember, a "denarii" was equivalent to a day's wage
    - Using the same rate above (\$50/day), the amount would be \$5000
  - b. The unmerciful servant refuses to heed the same plea made earlier by himself
- 3. The final result: Upon this cruel servant the king imposes the former sentence, even adding to it! – **Matthew 18:31-34**
  - a. Before, he, his family, and his possessions were only going to be sold
  - b. But now, he is to be handed over to the **"torturers"**

### **C. THE LESSON OF THE PARABLE.**

- 1. As stated by Jesus Himself – **Matthew 18:35**
  - a. **"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."**
  - b. Failure to forgive a brother will bring severe punishment!
- 2. **"Prompted by gratitude the forgiven sinner must always yearn to forgive whoever has trespassed against him"** (unknown)
- 3. We can also draw several subsidiary lessons:
  - a. We are all God's debtors – **Matthew 18:23; Romans 3:23**
  - b. None are able to pay what is owed – **Matthew 18:25**
  - c. But by Christ's atoning sacrifice, the debt is paid – **Matthew 18:27; Matthew 20:28**
  - d. Only those who are willing to forgive others can be assured that they are indeed forgiven – **Matthew 18:35; Matthew 6:14-15**
  - e. It should be easy to forgive others, for what we owe God is infinitely more than what others owe us – **Matthew 18:32, 33**
  - f. The unforgiving person is destined for everlasting punishment! – **Matthew 18:34-35; Romans 1:31**

### **CONCLUSION**

Perhaps the most important point we learn from this parable is that the kingdom of heaven is to consist of people who are both **forgiven and forgiving**, who have both received mercy and are merciful – **James 2:13**

I believe that when we truly contemplate the love, mercy, and forgiveness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

- It is indeed possible to forgive and forget.
- At least in the sense of removing it from the attention of our minds.

