



**Orthodox Church of the
Entrance of the Theotokos
into the Temple**

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Forgive as You Have Been Forgiven
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Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

With this eleventh Sunday after Pentecost we get into the heart of some of our Lord's most basic and clear teachings. In general, it must be said that the role of theology, in its attempt to define and defend Orthodox teaching, often comes across as technical, more akin to nuclear physics than to basic proclamation. But the parable we heard today our Lord's teaching is simplicity itself. There is nothing technical or difficult about its message!

The parable tells the story of a servant who somehow gets himself into debt, massive debt. The inference is that he must surely have stolen funds from his master. Jesus says he was in debt for the amount of 10,000 talents. This was a massive amount of money! A talent consisted of 6,000 Denarii, and a single Denarius was what a typical worker would get paid for a day's work. That's approximately the amount of money represented by 60,000,000 days work. The servant in debt for such a huge amount of money must have been very dishonest indeed! When the master finds out what he has done, the servant throws himself on the mercy of his master. And, astonishingly, the master forgives him. This in

itself would have been totally unexpected to anyone who heard the parable! But then, Jesus continues, to tell how this same servant was owed only 100 Denarii by another servant. Instead of extending the same mercy to the second servant, however, the first servant holds him accountable and refuses to forgive him. Anyone hearing this parable in the ancient setting in which it was told would have been outraged! Clearly, the action of that first servant was despicable! Jesus says that the master in the parable was outraged. He delivered that first servant to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. Jesus concludes, "So, My Heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses!"

It is no accident that this is the first parable we hear in our post Pentecost time of "ordinary time." Up to this point since Pentecost we have heard of a number of our Lord's miracles and a bit of His preaching in the Sermon on the Mount. But today, we are confronted with one of the most basic of all teachings of our Lord. We pray every day in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us!" This is among the most basic teachings of our faith. St. Matthew's Gospel was a kind of basic catechism for early catechumens. After the Evangelist covers the genealogy, birth and wilderness temptation, His mighty acts in word and deed, he presents some of the most basic teachings in our Lord's parables. If you would be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, then the clear message of this Gospel is that you must live accordingly. Since God has forgiven you the debt of your many sins and trespasses, which are truly immense, then you must forgive the sins of those who offend or hurt you!

We focus on this theme every year on forgiveness Sunday by means of our Pious Tradition to forgive the sins of each other at the beginning of Lent. Remember the story that of St. Tikhon told in his sermon on forgiveness?

One pious elder, noticing that his brother had committed a sin, sighed and said, "Woe is me! As he sinned today, so will I tomorrow." And the following is a story about another ascetic, Abba Moisei. A monk committed a sin. The brethren, who had assembled to decide his case, sent for Abba Moisei, but the humble elder refused to attend the council. When the rector sent for him a second time, he appeared, but in quite a striking manner. He had taken an old basket, filled it with sand and was carrying it on his back. "What does this mean?" asked the monks, catching sight of him. "See how many sins I bear behind me?" answered Moisei, pointing to the heap of sand. "I don't see them, yet I have come to pass judgment upon another."

Today we are reminded of this teaching that we so willingly embrace at the beginning of Great Lent. Consider the sins that God has forgiven you! And knowing how great a gift His forgiveness is to you, forgive the sins and offenses perpetrated or carried out against you by others. Your forgiveness will be a release from the burden of resentment, whether or not those who hurt you seek from you. For God does not wait until we are ready to be forgiven; He bestows it on us whether we are ready or not, and He waits for our repentance, our acceptance of what He gives us freely and without condition.

To Him be all honor and glory forever! Amen.

Fr. Elias

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