



MEDITATIONS FOR LENT by Father Robbie Low

### THIRD WEEK OF LENT – TUESDAY Matthew 18: 21-35

Hyperbole? Well, no.

When the King comes to check on his debtors this man has racked up an astonishing amount – the equivalent of a nation's annual GDP. God alone knows what he has done with this enormous bounty. What everyone recognises is that it is unpayable. The lost capital is irredeemable. The punishment is debtor's prison with all assets sold, including wife and kids, and that would be a mere fleabite in the mountain of debt – a mere gesture. He is to stay in prison forever – or til he has repaid – well that's definitely forever then.

There follows an extensive and heart rending *Kyrie Eleison*. The upshot of which is, incredibly, forgiveness of the unpayable debt, freedom and the possibility of restoration.

Is the lucky man grateful, changed, responsive to the experience of mercy? Sadly and disastrously not. He goes straight from the mercy seat of his Lord and King and assaults a bloke who owes him a fiver but hasn't got it just now. Absolutely outrageous. We don't hesitate to agree with the other servants and the king that this bloke has traduced the trust and kindness of all and, tragically, now lives in a prison of his own making.

I, of course, am the man with the unpayable debt. I squander, regularly, the immense bounty of my Lord and King. When called to account I cannot pay. Only the pardon from the Cross in response to my desperate *Christe Eleison* can avail me before the Sovereign Lord of all.

How do I spend this great gift of His mercy? How do I live God's pardon? Jesus tells Peter, in the Gospel, 'not seven times but seventy times seven'.

Forgiveness is the currency of the kingdom.

It is enshrined in our defining prayer – ‘forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’

If we receive forgiveness we have a duty to pass it on. If we block the channels of mercy we will pay a heavy price in the soul and in eternity.

Forgiveness is very costly but....

Forgiveness is liberation. Forgiveness is life. Forgiveness is reconciliation - with the King and with our fellow servants.

The alternative is the prison of the soul and eternal banishment from the court of the King who has paid our unpayable debt on the Cross of Calvary.

***Spiritual exercise:*** If there is someone you struggle to forgive, name them and ask God’s help in beginning that process. Take them to the foot of the Cross of Jesus in your prayers and ask for the joy of the freedom to forgive.