

**The Question of the Week**

Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a king who is owed a great deal by his foreman who begs to be given more time to pay back what he owes. The king relents. BUT the same servant encounters one of his own servants who owes him. He demands payment. The servant pleads but the forgiven servant will not respond in kind.

Matthew 18: 21-35

Forgiveness gratefully received but forgiveness not graciously extended. Double standard. Sad to say, it happens. It happens more than we would like to think. This story of the unforgiving steward who is let off the hook even though his indebtedness is great cannot find any similar forgiveness in his own heart for someone he knows pretty well, well enough to lend money to.

I have thought at different times in my own life: “Who would hold back such forgiveness?” Well, I myself have fallen into that trap. I have been on the receiving end of great forgiveness and great assistance at various times in my life. But I have also turned right around and acted in a very stingy fashion with my own compassion and my own forgiveness. The reason: They were not deserving of my forgiveness, I thought to myself. They aren’t sorry enough. They will just take advantage of me, I thought.

Now, let’s make things a little more complicated. Let’s add culture or race to the picture. I won’t forgive them. They are not worthy of my forgiveness. You know how they are, I think to myself. Do you hear how dismissive, how disrespectful, how disdainful such thinking is? And if the color of your skin differs from the speaker? Or if your native tongue is different from the speaker? Or if your legal status is different from the speaker? I begin to feel entitled sometimes to feel the way I do, to act the way I do. But I am not justified. Not according to the One who is telling the story. And the forgiveness of God is revoked by God because it was not offered to another after it had been so generously offered to the man who owed a great deal. If I do not extend respect and forgiveness to the one who owes me, the Lord will not continue to offer his forgiveness to me because I am still greatly indebted to Him. Are we really hearing what is being said here? That is the question of the week.