

Pastor Roy's Sermon from September 17, 2017

Children's sermon: Joseph and his brothers did not get along. They didn't like each other, they didn't trust each other. They didn't change when they grew up. They were jealous of one another. They often got revenge. They finally were separated when they sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt. But then they met him again after he worked his way up from slave, to prisoner, to the king's

Jesus' parables test and stretch our attitudes toward grace and our faith in the law of cause and effect.

10k talents is 150,000 years of labor. 100 denarii is 100 days of labor.

The slave owes the king 150,000 years of hard work, that is 54 million 750 k days of hard work. How did he get into such debt? It's inconceivable. It's the impossible debt. No bankruptcy will save him. The debt is his. But he insists, give me the chance, I will repay!

Really. . .??? But the king does not ask, and *how will you do THAT?* You *might* be able to work 10,000 days (27 years, no vacations) before you die or can't work anymore. . . That only leaves 54 million 740k days of labor which you still owe. He pities the man and forgives the debt. No sweat. Debt forgiveness. Freedom from a lifetime of incapacitating bondage to pay the impossible debt. With the wave of his hand, the very poor, man with no rights is freed. He is still a slave, mind you, but he can live and work, have a few possessions and enjoy his family rather than rot in debtors' prison with nothing and no one. Hmm.

He walks away. He either still plans on paying back the impossible debt, or he just figures that now is his chance cash in on the good life which involves stuff and money in his coin purse. . . Either way, he is lost to the idea of grace. He finds the man who owes him 100 days labor, and demands payment.

And oops, the King of impossible debt forgiveness hears about it and then catches up to the slave with the impossible debt forgiven. . . and the debt is reactivated. As the debtless servants take the indebted slave away, you hear the king whisper, see you in 54 million years. . .

So what is grace? Does grace only work for those who understand and practice it? Or is this parable about peace? Maybe both. Jesus is challenging us to rethink our world views, to rethink the way we find mercy and show mercy.

Certainly, he is inviting us to wonder, if we hope to receive mercy, if we hope to know mercy and mercy's friend, peace, perhaps we need to practice mercy.

Joseph's brothers fear he practiced mercy just while their father was watching, out of fear of losing the final blessing. But Joseph has grown up. He has forgiven. He has let go the urge to hold a grudge. He has discovered the joy of mercy, which needs no supervision, which needs no threat of punishment, which simply enjoys the grace at work in the universe. Joseph is one of the few wise men in the Old Testament. Like his uncle Esau, he has learned to forgive, to let go, to take his place in the universe with no strings attached, but with freedom, grace, mercy.

How do we live? Are we pushing out the limits of grace and mercy, or do we seek every advantage of debt collecting. Are we still seeking revenge and paybacks in a universe built upon grace? The universe operates by grace. Things happen freely. A cricket sings. A tree grows. A star shines. A planet spins. Water flows. Friendship grows. Grace is constantly extended to all.

I believe Jesus is inviting us to join the flow of grace, to release the impossible debts, and find joy.

Grace is a discipline. The more we practice it, the better we get, beginning with ourselves. Let us love ourselves and those who offend us, and there will be plenty of grace to go around. Thanks be to God.