## Quotes and Parables on the theme of Forgiveness – What is meant by forgiveness?

\* All quotes from the Gospels are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible as recommended by the Episcopal church (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/>).

**Forgiveness as one of the fundamental principles of Christian life**

The Greek verb used in the Gospels in the sense of ‘*to forgive’* is ‘*aphiēmi’,* meaning **to send away**/ **to send forth**, to bid going away or depart; to let go, to let alone.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

*And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

**Nicene Creed:**

[…]

*We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.*

**The Apostle Creed:**

[…]

*I believe in […]*

*the forgiveness of sins,*

**Questions for reflections**

What do we mean by “forgiveness”?

What do we feel when we forgive someone the wrong, they have done to us?

Do we feel that forgiveness is a ‘reciprocal transaction’ – I forgive because I want God to forgive me?

When is it difficult for me to forgive others?

Can we truly forgive when we still feel anger or resentment towards others?

Why do we have to remind ourselves about forgiveness of sins in the Creed we recite every Sunday?

**The parable of the prodigal son, Luke 15:11-32**

*11 Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons.*

[*12*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-12.html)*The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them.*

[*13*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-13.html)*A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.*

[*14*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-14.html)*When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.*

[*15*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-15.html)*So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.*

[*16*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-16.html)*He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.*

[*17*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-17.html)*But* ***when he came to himself*** *he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!*

[*18*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-18.html)*I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him,* ***"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;***

[***19***](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-19.html)***I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." '***

[*20*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-20.html)*So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.*

[*21*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-21.html)*Then the son said to him, "****Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'***

[*22*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-22.html)*But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.*

[*23*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-23.html)*And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;*

[*24*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-24.html)*for* ***this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!****' And they began to celebrate.*

[*25*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-25.html)*"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.*

[*26*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-26.html)*He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.*

[*27*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-27.html)*He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.'*

[*28*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-28.html)***Then he became angry and refused to go in.*** *His father came out and began to plead with him.*

[*29*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-29.html)*But he answered his father,* ***"Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.***

[*30*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-30.html)*But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!'*

[*31*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-31.html)*Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.*

[*32*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/luke/15-32.html)*But we had to celebrate and rejoice****, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "***

**Questions for reflections**

Have we ever behaved like the older son – being angry and jealous that someone has been better treated than us?

Was the older brother’s jealousy justified? What feelings did he have toward his brother?

When did we ‘came to ourselves’ as it happened to the ‘prodigal son’? Did we feel humiliated at that time?

How do we know that the younger son repented?

Was it wise of the father to divide his property while he was still alive? Would you do that? Would you trust your children that they would honor the inheritance?

Is following one’s free will always so disastrous in consequences?

**Luke 16:1-13**

*1 Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property.*

*2 So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’*

*3 Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.*

*4 I have decided what to do so that, when* ***I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’***

*5 So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’*

*6 He answered, ‘****A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’***

*7 Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’*

*8 And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly;* ***for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.***

*9 And I tell you,* ***make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth*** *so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.*

*10 “****Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.***

*11 If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?*

*12 And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?*

*13 No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*

**Questions for reflections**

Is Christ recommending us to be dishonest in financial or material matters towards others?

Was the shrewd manager thinking only about himself?

How can we know that we are dealing with dishonest wealth? Is securing such wealth for others a good deed – worthy of ‘eternal homes’?

**The parable of unforgiven debtor**

**Mt 18:21-35**

*21 Then Peter came and said to him, "****Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?"***

[*22*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-22.html)*Jesus said to him,* ***"Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.***

[*23*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-23.html)*"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.*

[*24*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-24.html)*When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him;*

[*25*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-25.html)*and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.*

[*26*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-26.html)***So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'***

[***27***](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-27.html)***And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.***

[*28*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-28.html)*But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe.'*

[*29*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-29.html)*Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'*

[*30*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-30.html)*But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt.*

[*31*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-31.html)*When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.*

[*32*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-32.html)*Then his lord summoned him and said to him,* ***"You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.***

[***33***](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-33.html)***Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?'***

[*34*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-34.html)*And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt.*

[***35***](https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/matthew/18-35.html)***So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."***

**Questions for reflections**

Do we often calculate like Peter – feeling that we have been too generous towards others?

Do we follow the rule ‘tit for tat’ or ‘tooth for tooth’ Towards others? Do we have the same expectation towards ourselves?

Was the punishment of the unmerciful debtor just? Wasn’t it too harsh?

What does Jesus Christ mean ‘to forgive from your heart’?

Can we feel in our hearts when we are merciful towards others and when we are harsh?

Are we always angry when we punish others harshly?

[Prepared by Maria L. de Ris]