

## Mercy Me

**Intro.** A gratuity is usually a tip, money given after some service like a meal at a restaurant. It is over and above the cost of the food. It can be recognition of how well or how badly the server kept our drinks refilled and our meal served in a timely manner. Or not. Some people don't believe in gratuities. Peter wanted to *feel* generous. But when seven times were used up, that was it; no more. It would be tough to be the eighth person in his day. Sorry, but I'm all out. Come back tomorrow.

**I.** There are always many details in the parables, but only one meaning. The king is not God. God would never order us to be sold to pay off a debt to him. And besides there was no law in Judaism saying that. The whole debt was forgiven without a payment plan spread out over a few thousand months

or even “pay me back when you can.” The King said, “Forget about it.” For some reason the first servant didn't feel the mercy of being forgiven a debt he could never repay. His focus seemed to be only on the money he was going to collect. The other guy could have easily paid his smaller debt in three months but was offered no mercy. There is the meaning of the parable. The Father will treat us how we treat each other. We tend to keep records of the real and imagined slights, insults and hurts done against us. We also look for opportunities to stick it to those who have caused us pain. The world is awash in hurt, resentment and violence. Instead of finding ways to forgive and heal, we seem to find ever new ways to inflict pain on each other. Five years ago this past June, was the terrible shooting of church members in South Carolina. Within a short

time, some of the parishioners said they forgave the man who did it. The congregation is primarily Black; the shooter White. It was a *gratuitous* act of forgiveness. That act of mercy quelled what could have been more days of violence.

**Concl.** The definition of gratuitous is, “uncalled for,” “for no good reason.” Was the punishment of the first servant by the king in the parable gratuitous? It seems a little over the top, to sell him, his family and his property to pay the debt. Yes, the Lord told it that way on purpose so Peter would get the point. How about the forgiveness of the whole debt, was that gratuitous? Of course it was and the Lord meant it that way. And yet the first servant accepted it quickly for himself but wouldn’t give the same unexpected mercy to another. It is easy to see it in a story about other people; it can be difficult to see in

our own lives. How many times a day do we forgive people or instead, hold a grudge against them. When we ask sincerely, God doesn’t forgive us seventy-seven times or four hundred ninety times. It is every time! We find it hard to forgive even the people closest to us - our families and friends. If we don’t learn to do that, we will never learn to forgive the people we go to school with or work with or even strangers. **The prayer to his Father the Lord taught his disciples makes it very clear. The consequences are that God won’t forgive us. That is not gratuitous, it is for good reason if we don’t forgive. Try being gratuitous more often.**

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