

“Philosophical Ponderings” Series

*“Wherever water flows, life flourishes:
wherever tears fall, Divine mercy is shown.”*

“Rumi”

The way we treat others is the way we can expect to be treated. We may not like to admit it, but the Bible is pretty clear on this point: That’s what Jesus said in the Lord’s Prayer, **“Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.”** Each time I offer the Prayers of the People and lead us all into “Our Father who art in Heaven...” I have a personal struggle to not say the two words Debts and Debtors. I say what all of us learned in Vacation Bible School at Kingsmill Community Church and repeated each summer while I taught VBS until I was eighteen.

Jesus also taught the disciples to say forgive us our trespasses rather than debtors and that is one of the reasons the United Methodist Hymnals and Worship Guides use Trespass(es). On multiple occasions, I have prayed and proudly said “debts” and “debtors” at the same time you say trespass and trespasses. Old habits are hard to break.

Remembering the extent of our forgiveness depends on how forgiving each of us will be to those who strike out against us. The same is true of mercy. The more merciful you and I are to others, the more likely we are to experience others being merciful to us. The Greek word for mercy has to do with feeling another person’s pain and identifying with another person’s need. To experience something in common is sympathy in the best sense of the word.

Jesus announces this work of grace during his Sermon on the Mount. He speaks to generations of disciples, including you as you read this now. This paraphrases what he says:

You’re blessed when you live humbly, for then you belong to God’s new order.
You’re blessed when you experience loss, for you will receive strength.
You’re blessed when you are content, grateful for what can never be taken away.
You’re blessed when you ache for God’s justice; you will receive what you seek.
You’re blessed when you are generous; generosity will be shown to you.
You’re blessed when your motives are pure; you will meet God face to face.
You’re blessed when you labor for peace; in this you resemble your Maker.
You’re blessed in suffering for what is right; then you belong to God’s new order.
You’re blessed when people harass and malign you.
Keep up your courage, for the advantage is already yours.

This is how people of conscience have been treated from the first. As Rumi wrote: wherever tears fall, Divine mercy is shown.

Thank you, Holy and Gracious God!

Peace Always

Ted