

**When you first read that parable, you may think “well how appalling, what an awful way to behave”, and what makes it awful is that the servant who has moments before been treated with an almost unbelievable compassion and mercy, having been let off a very great debt - does not act in the same way towards someone who owes him a fraction of the amount.**

**To give you some idea of the huge difference between the two amounts, if the second servant owed one hundred pounds, then the first servant owed his master sixty million pounds – and so the point is driven home, and as with all the parables, the deeper, hidden meaning is that this is what God is like, his mercy and compassion is such that he will forgive the human race for the huge debt it owes the debt of sin.**

**And so here is the string in the tail of the parable. Before God, we are like that first servant – utterly indebted to God, insolvent, no hope of repaying him.**

**Human history is littered with the results of our own inability to love God and neighbour, and every time we hurt or offend God and each other we add to that debt once more – we have seen many recent examples of it in the terror attacks, we see in the attitudes and actions of**

**nations threatening each other with military force. We wonder why the human race can't just live in peace, with tolerance and respect for one another.**

**The debt is great, and we add to it every time we treat each other badly and forget that we are all children of God, with an inalienable human dignity - we ourselves can bear grudges, we can refuse to forgive those who have offended or hurt us, we can harbour resentment. How much the human race needs God and his mercy.**

**So this is how Jesus meant us to see this parable – which is why he used such an enormous sum of money in his example – even if the man had sold all his possessions and given himself into slavery, that would not have met a fraction of the debt; and the same with us – we cannot hope to put ourselves right with God.**

**But here is the astonishing thing – God cancels the debt. In fact he pays it all for us by sending his Son to die on the cross – the well known verse in John chapter 3 says :**

**“God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into**

**the world to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.”**

**So the debt has been completely paid – we can now be at rights with God, through his loving mercy and compassion we can be accepted by him, we can know his divine love and grace, we can actually share his divine life – all we have to do is accept the fact, to grasp something of the enormity of what God has achieved on our behalf, and live our lives accordingly.**

**This is what the servant in the gospel did not do – he did not allow his master’s unbelievable and unimaginably generous act of mercy to touch his heart - if he had truly realised what had just happened to him, his life would have been completely changed, from that moment on he would have begun a new life - a life of compassion, generosity, forgiveness, but instead he shows us the opposite - a petty, selfish desire for the repayment of a trifling sum, even after his fellow servant begs for mercy, his heart is still unmoved, and he has him thrown into prison, and for this, he himself receives the same punishment from the master, for failing to show the same mercy which he himself had been shown.**

**And Jesus is warning us, and the world, don’t be like him, instead, forgive your brother from your heart. Not always easy, but we ask for that grace every day, when we pray:**

**“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. We say them at every Mass as well, as we prepare for Holy Communion, and we also, just before communion, share with each other the peace of Christ.**

**Holy Communion, which unites us with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, and assures us that through the unbounded mercy and generosity of the Great and Merciful God, our sins are forgiven; each time we receive communion, it should remind us of this, and so touch our hearts that all anger hatred, resentment and desire for revenge should melt away, to be replaced with a strong yearning for peace and reconciliation in our own lives and relationships, and in the world.**

**Let us ask for this special grace, which comes to us through the sacraments, that we may share in the peace of Christ who offered his life for the sake of us all. And on this Home Mission Sunday let us pray for people who have not heard this word of peace and mercy; that through the Church, through our witness, they may listen to and embrace God’s call to reconciliation.**