

Do not quarrel, but forgive.

Matthew 17 vv.22 and 23.

Mark 9 vv.30-32.

Luke 9 vv.43-45.

The Lord Jesus has returned to Galilee. Formerly He would have been sought out at once by a numerous multitude. He would have preached; He would have performed miracles, one after the other. But this time Jesus avoids the people as much as possible, for we read in Mark 9: "And He would not that any man should know it."

He walks alone with His disciples for the last time through Galilee. The disciples are still looking out for an earthly kingdom for their Master. They hoped that He would one day wear a temporal crown. The three disciples who had been with Him upon the mountain, had seen that night however that Jesus was glorified; they had heard then the voice of God. Yet deep in their heart lived a silent hope that one of these days the Lord Jesus would assume the crown. But this thought must be removed from them.

Suddenly Jesus tells them that He will be taken prisoner by the elders of the Jewish people; yes, even worse than that, they will put Him to death.

This is the second time that Jesus tells them openly that He is to suffer and die. The first time the disciples did not understand His words. Neither do they fully understand now what their Master means by these words.

And though the Lord Jesus foretells at the same time that after three days He shall rise again, they are still sorrowful. "Exceeding sorry"; it says in Matthew. O, they would rather not think about such things, they would rather not talk about it. No, no, that is too sad, it is too terrible. None of them answer Him as He tells them about these things. They are silent. They feel that something fearful is going to take place, but they want to dismiss those unpleasant thoughts from their minds. "They understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him." - thus we read in God's Word.

They follow Him in silence, but there is no joy in their hearts, and their eyes have a sad, sorrowful look.

Matthew 17 vv.24-27.

In Jerusalem stood the temple. There was the service and worship of the Lord. That building had of course to be kept in repair. If anything became worn out or damaged, it had to be renewed. In short there was a great deal

required, and it all ~~xxxxx~~ cost a great deal of money.

Therefore all male Jews over the age of twenty, paid a little money every year. This was the temple tribute. Throughout the land men were appointed to collect this money, for not only the Jews in Judea, but also the Jews in Galilee and in Trans-Jordan had to pay. None was free. Poor and rich had to give the same amount.

Just when the Lord Jesus came back to Capernaum the tribute money was being collected.

When these men see Peter, they go to him and ask: "Doth not your Master pay tribute?"

They look inquiringly at Peter. They are curious to know what his answer will be, for as far as they are concerned Jesus is just as much bound to support the service of the Lord at Jerusalem as another man.

At once Peter replies: "Yes."

Of course. He had never thought about it before, but now they ask him, he has no doubt that Jesus also will give that money.

He enters the house where Jesus is staying and makes his way straight to Jesus. He will just have a word with his Master about this. He will remind Him about it.

Yet, before he can say anything, Jesus asks him: "What thinkest thou Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers?"

Peter replies without hesitation: "Of strangers."

"Then are the children free," says the Lord Jesus.

The Lord means: "Peter, you have said outside that I pay the temple tribute too, but really I need not do so. I, the Son of God, should not surely be required to give money ~~from~~ for my Father's house?"

Well, Peter does not know what to reply to this, for what Jesus says is right. He had not thought of that.

Then says Jesus: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend the Jews, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou has opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and for thee."

Shortly afterwards Peter makes his way to the sea and ... it comes to pass exactly as Jesus had told him. The first fish which Peter takes from the

water has a stater in its mouth, and with it Peter pays the required tribute.

The Lord Jesus ordered everything so that just that fish was taken by Peter.

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Matthew 18 vv.1-20.

Mark 9 vv.33-50.

Luke 9 vv.46-50.

One day Jesus is again walking with His disciples in Galilee. But just look! How excitedly the disciples are talking together. They are having a heated discussion. Yes, they are speaking in low voices, so that their Master shall not hear them, but they look at each other fiercely. Whatever is the matter? What are they discussing? Has another great miracle taken place? ... No, not at all. The disciples are quarrelling among themselves. Quarrelling? ... Yes, just look. Can you not see the angry looks with which they behold each other? ... Why are they behaving like this? ...

Oh, you know that Jesus had three disciples who were often permitted to accompany Him while the others had to stay behind. Now, perhaps these three thought that they were a little more important. They thought that Jesus was more fond of them. The others could not bear this and they became jealous. And now they are disputing among themselves as to which of them is the greatest or most important.

To all appearances the Lord Jesus did not notice what was happening, for He walks on as usual and acts as though He hears nothing of the argument.

But when they get indoors Jesus asks suddenly: "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" ...

The disciples remain silent. They had not expected such a question. They are ashamed and dare not relate it.

The Lord knows however that jealousy lurks in the hearts of some of His followers.

He rebukes them for arguing about who shall be the greatest. In an earthly kingdom the lord is greater than his servant, but in the kingdom of heaven it is not so. They must not think of their own honour, but God's honour and glory are the all important.

The Lord Jesus then calls a child to Him and tells His disciples that they must become like this child. A child does not think of its own honour, a small child

is as yet so innocent and loving in this respect. That is what they must be like. One must not think that he is greater than another, but they must serve and help each other in love. "For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great."

Here there is also a lesson for you, boys and girls. You too are so fond of being first are you not? Everyone must listen to you. And why? ... Well, you want to be honoured. Your friends must look up to you, mustn't they? ... Wrong! Do not always try to be "king of the castle" for that does not become you and it is moreover sinful pride.

The Lord Jesus said a great deal more to His disciples at this time, but that is too difficult for you at the moment.

First and foremost Jesus pointed out to them that they were not to quarrel. They must forgive one another their wrong and angry words.

"Lord," says Peter, "how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?"

"Not seven times," comes Jesus' answer, "but seventy times even." It is as though the Lord says: "That is something you mustn't count. You must always forgive your neighbour. That is your duty. God requires it of you."

And then the Lord Jesus tells His disciples a parable.

Let us listen to it. Mind you pay careful attention!

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Matthew 18 vv.22-34.

He tells them that there was once a king who was very rich. When one day he started to take account, it appeared that one of his servants owed him ten thousand talents. That was an enormous sum of money. Thousands of pounds!

"Go and fetch him!" commanded the king.

Soon the servant enters. "Pay me what thou owest," said the king, sternly. What then? ... The servant goes pale, for he cannot pay his debt since he has no money.

"Take him to prison, and sell all that he has." comes the king's command. "Sell his wife and his children too for slaves!"

When the servant hears this terrible sentence, he falls trembling before the prince and pleads with a faltering voice: "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."

Yes, the servant can say that, but he cannot do it, he can never pay it.

The king knows it too. When however he sees his servant lying there he has compassion on him and answers: "I forgive thee all. You need pay me nothing. You are free! Go back to your wife and children."

The servant rises. He is in a moment free from his great debt.

Look, the servant is leaving the royal palace. But in the street he meets another servant of the king. This servant owes to him a hundred pence, which is between two and three pounds.

"Ah," thinks the first servant, "I want my money."

He goes to his fellow-servant and says gruffly: "Pay me that thou owest."

The second servant is greatly shocked and answers: "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all."

But the first servant will wait no longer and he has his fellow-servant cast into prison. How cruel, don't you agree? Is that how he shows his gratitude? ...

The king hears what has happened though, and he becomes angry.

Indignantly he commands that the servant be brought before him once more.

"O thou wicked servant" says the king wrathfully, "I forgate thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldest thou not also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" "And his lord was wrath, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him."

Thus the king has that wicked servant shut up in prison.

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So you see, boys and girls, the Lord Jesus told this parable to His disciples. But why? What did the Lord mean by it?

We, as men are deeply indebted to God. Through our many sins we anger the Lord. Yes our debt to God is so great that we can never pay it. If the Lord will forgive this immense debt of guilt to all who in truth plead for it, is it not then our duty to forgive each other's trespasses?

How often does it happen that you become angry about the smallest wrong. Forgive? ... Not in the least! You try to get your own back!

Are there among you such "fighters"? Are you always read to strike a blow? Yes? ... Shame on you. If the Lord had dealt with you like that, then you would long be dead, you would now be in hell.

No, do not fight all the time! Do not keep quarrelling, but forgive each other, for that is your duty. And do not forgive by halves, but with all your heart.