

*"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged."*

This parable is found only in the gospel of Luke. It is the only time the word for creditor is used in the New Testament. A creditor is someone to whom you owe money. You are therefore the debtor. We should avoid being either a borrower or a lender, but in the real world we know that is far from easy.

In Proverbs 22v7 *"The rich rules over the poor and the borrower is servant to the lender"* There is no moral issue involved here, it just is true. The power that money has is not an invention but is real. Money is the medium of exchange and the store of value. Is you have money you have value, economic value, not spiritual value. It allows you to obtain what you want economically as it is the medium of exchange. People will grant you goods and services for money because then you can purchase your own goods or services in turn. A person with more money, the creditor, is not evil, just richer. It is also a store of value. We can delay buying because of money, the excess crops can be sold before they rot and their value ruined.

God is the creditor here. Let us remember that we all owe so much to Him and to His Son Jesus Christ, a debt none can repay. However do we then say, we are forgiven we are now equal? How absurd to think like that! Very soon we will be in His debt again when we continue in sin. Since God is the creditor, being a creditor cannot be morally wrong. The modern world is based on debt, and the true creditors are the future generations from whom the money has been borrowed but without seeking their permission. To borrow without permission is actually theft. To say that you will pay it back on your terms is unjust, and the real corruption is that the debt will be repaid by the next generation from whom the previous generation has borrowed. This system cannot continue on perpetually, it will have a sad and catastrophic end which will be worse than the hardship of going without, but man is ever blind to reality.

This is a simple enough parable to understand which is why Jesus gave in the context of a socially difficult incident of the compromised woman who was a sinner and the awkwardness of public acceptance. This is the real issue behind the parable. We all sin but only those who have a proper recognition of their own failures and the grace which has accrued to them through the love of the Almighty towards them, are those who love God as we should. This is not a world where a sycophantic divine being is squeezing out recognition from a reluctant creation but instead the reality is, mankind can rarely be bothered to give God the respect He is due, many even deny He exists!

It is not a question of running rampant in sin so that we can therefore appreciate the Eternal more, but rather of the self-examination that we all should generate in a healthy way. It is not a question of wallowing in self-loathing because of sin, but of recognising in all good conscience that we are all flawed creatures and that we can and should do more to stand against sin. It is never too late to do something about our position, like the repentant sinner in context who wanted to get close to Jesus because she recognised that in him was the real wealth, which is the real power against sin.

The critics of Jesus feared the contamination of the physical touch of a sinful woman, which is absurd as if the defilement could be transferred in this way. The real defilement was not merely in giving in to the weakness of the flesh, but in refusing to admit that we all possess those propensities to sin within us and that the old man of condemnation needs to be starved of sustenance. Apportioning greater sin to some and not others is a folly which is comforting in its deception. It means that we can regard ourselves as in some way superior to others because they are more public in their sin. The adulterous woman was to be stoned, but the man who did not pay his proper taxes hid his crime from view.

Children soon learn that a lie can cause you to escape immediate punishment but when discovered do we reward them for their lies by denying them the punishment they deserve and lied to avoid? Is that the lesson we wish to teach them? The parable is not stated to say that we can all escape the consequences of sin by just saying that we are “sorry”, but that the fact that forgiveness is on offer does not affect everyone the same. Are we truly thankful when we are forgiven or do we regard it as our right and that God has to forgive us to prove He is a good God?

When society collapses everything is affected. Isaiah 24v2 says it well *“And it shall be as with the people so with the priest, as with the servant so with the master, as with the maid so with the mistress, as with the buyer so with the seller, as with the lender so with the borrower, as with the taker of usury so with the giver of usury to him”*. There are always layers to every society and those at the top economically are not the spoilers as they are often depicted to be.

The incident of the widow’s mite should remind us that everyone can and should be a giver, even the poorest of us. It is not the sole prerogative of the better off to be those who assist others. Even if we struggle to give economically or materially can we not all give spiritually?