

SIN, JUSTICE AND MERCY

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Brethren, did you know that there are 36 parables in the New Testament used by Jesus Christ to teach his disciples?

What is a parable? Well, one definition is that it is a earthly story, with a heavenly meaning. In other words the physical is explaining the spiritual. Well, that is exactly what I intent to do today. I would like to encourage all of you, especially those of you of YES and YOU age, to see if you can recognize the spiritual lessons contained in the following true story.

Most of you, I am sure, have heard of La Guardia Airport. It is one of the major airports in New York City. The airport owes its name to Fiorello H. La Guardia who was Mayor of New York City from 1933 to 1945. But Mr. La Guardia, who was of Italian decent, was not only Mayor of New York City, he also served in the United States Congress, holding a seat in the House of Representatives for many years, and was Deputy Attorney General for New York.

It was during his time as a Judge, that a man came before his bench who was accused of stealing a loaf of bread.

When the Judge questioned him about it, the man admitted his guilt, but pointed to his wife and child who were in the court room, and told the Judge that he simply couldn't see them starve anymore.

Judge La Guardia said, I am sorry, but the law is the law, and promptly found him guilty, fining him 10.00 dollars, which the man, of course, didn't have, and couldn't pay.

Then the Judge spoke to all who where in his courtroom, saying, that it was a travesty that anybody in this city had to starve and steal to eat. He said, if everybody in this courtroom would just give 50 cents, this man's fine could be paid, and if anything was left over, the man could even buy some food. With this he reached for his billfold and took out \$ 10.00 and put it into his hat hanging nearby. Then he passed the hat around and collected \$ 47.50. He took out the \$10.00 that he put in, and paid the man's fine, and gave the rest to the man as a gift to buy food.

So goes the story of Judge Fiorello H. La Guardia, who without compromising justice, without compromising the law, showed mercy.

What can we learn from this story, from this parable?

I have entitled this sermonette: **Sin, Justice and Mercy**. Obviously, three very important concepts, in fact, they are probably the three *most* important concepts in the Bible.

But first of all let me ask you: Do you realize -- are you aware, that you and I presently, yes, right now, are in a courtroom? That you and I presently, yes, right now, are before a judge, just like the man in the story?

Turn to I Pet. 4:17, a familiar scripture, but have you ever looked at it quite this way? I Pet. 4:17 *"For the time has come [notice, the time has already come, it is not something in the future] "For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God."* Yes, you and I, that is God's Church, are presently - and have been since our baptism - in the courtroom of life so to speak, and God, that is Jesus Christ, is *presently* judging us. That is a fact.

The question is, are we before the judge denying our guilt or have we all come to full repentance, freely admitting our guilt, as did the man in the story?

Undoubtedly, we too will want to justify ourselves, just like the man who pointed to his family, and said; I stole because I couldn't see them starve anymore.

What is your justification for sinning?

Well, some may be saying to God right now: I have been out of work for a long time and therefore I have to steal, lie or cheat. Some will say: The lusts of this world got to me, and others will blame greed that got a hold of them. Maybe it was a brother that caused us to stumble, and some, undoubtedly, will fall back on the old classic and say with Adam: The wife you gave me, the woman, she is the one who caused me to sin.

But think about it! Does it make any difference why we have sinned? Sin will demand its just penalty, *without* regard as to why we did it. If you jump off a ten story building you will crash to your death, regardless of *why* you jumped.

The man stole, and in the court room of man, the penalty was \$10.00.

You and I have sinned, and in the court room of God, the penalty is death.

"The wages of sin is death" says Rom. 6:23.

The righteous Judge will uphold the law and pronounce us guilty!

Well, it seems like this would be the end of the story. But, obviously it is not! For now comes the wonderful news, the good news, which is expressed so beautifully in John 3:16 where it says:

"For God so loved the world (God so loved you and I), that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God desires that we do *not* perish. Here we see God Himself, just like the Judge in the story, paying the penalty for us, by allowing His Son Jesus Christ, to die in *our* behalf.

This then is the mercy of God. We have seen the judgment of God, but here is the mercy of God, and *"mercy will triumph over judgment,"* God tells us in James 2:13.

Let me read to you from Ps.103. Many of the Psalms speak of the mercy of God., here is Ps.103:8-16 from the Living Bible:

"He [God] is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it; he is slow to get angry and full of kindness and love. He never bears a grudge, nor remains angry forever. He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins, for his mercy toward those who fear and honor him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west. For he knows we are but dust, and that our days are few and brief, like grass, like flowers, blown by the wind and gone forever."

What an incredible description of a righteous Judge and a loving Father. Yes, God not only wants to pay our penalty, He also desires to give us a gift - the gift of eternal life.

This is clearly expressed in Rom. 6:23. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life"*. What a gift! A gift, undeserved, but gratefully acknowledged and accepted, hopefully, by all of us.

And so, we can walk out of the courtroom of life when we die, not only freed from the penalty of past sins, but with life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord.