

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



July 24, 2022

DEBT

it is the enemy of faith

by Drew Downs

One of the most famous commands people of faith *never* follow has to do with debt. We are forbidden from charging interest. But we do it anyway. And we can't even imagine not doing so.

One of the most famous examples of the thinking behind this command has nothing to do with money. We know it as "an eye for an eye." A teaching that argues that justice be **limited** to *only* as much as the original sin.

In other words, you don't get to take *extra* because you feel justified in "paying them back" two- or three-fold.

The thing about debt is that we need to conceive of a time when the debt is gone. We can't keep punishing forever or enslave another person through interest. We can't destroy others because we think we are owed something *more*. This is the hallmark of its own sin.

ORDINARY TIME

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

The last few weeks, I've shared some thoughts about vacation with you while I am away on vacation. (Don't worry, I wrote this all ahead of time!)

This week, I want to invite us to think about rest and how it really works for us.

Scientists have studied how our bodies work in the process of going on vacation. They find it takes several days into a vacation to shed the normal anxiety of our regular lives. Before we can really start to feel like we are on vacation. To let all that junk go. It takes about three or four days to relax and another three or four to feel the flow.

Then, on the other end, our brains start to prepare to get back in. A week out, our brains sort of *remember* what "normal" is and then three days later, start to prepare us for reintegration to our normal lives.

So, for those who take a two week vacation, we might get a day or two of *real* vacation. And when we take a day or two here and there, we never get the full effect of vacation.

This puts a really different frame for me on what *Sabbath* means for us. Sabbath is the day of rest each week. The respite from the daily grind. But if our brains take so long to *truly* rest, then what does it mean that so few of us actually get to experience it? What does it mean for us to be so *starved* of rest and the opportunity to recuperate? And what of all of these exceptions we've made for the Pandemic time?

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 24 2022

Collect

○ God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 11:1-13

"And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us."

Reflection

The part of the Lord's Prayer I think we have the hardest time with is the sins part. When we pray it on Sunday, we say "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Or if you're more into the "traditional" language, we say "forgive us our trespasses" (which always makes me think about walking on somebodies yard—which isn't the worst image for it).

I suppose that, because we say this prayer all the time, this part doesn't have the deepest resonance with us. It sounds exactly like Jesus's response about the greatest commandment: love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

So, forgive them, and they forgive you. What goes around comes around. Love everybody.

ORDINARY TIME

But here, Jesus uses a word that we might find far more jarring.

He says to pray that God forgive our sins just as "we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us."

We prefer the language of sin because that's about morals and behavior. Or we like trespasses, because it is relational. But talking about debt opens up a can of worms we just *do not* like to talk about.

Our indebting others is sin.

Of course it is complicated. But so is sin. All of this is complicated!

What Jesus is describing in this prayer is about freedom in God and our part in helping free each other. From sin. Debt. Burden. Hatred. Conflict. Broken relationship.

And one of the most consistent words throughout scripture and in the teachings of Jesus is about economic exploitation: gaining wealth on the backs of the poor. So when we pray about being forgiven our sin *as* we have forgiven those indebted to us, we are rightly acknowledge how *big* our ask of God is. Because we have a hard time letting go of *income*.

This prayer reminds us, not of how balanced we *think* the world is, but how generous we *believe* God is. And how generous we are called to be in light of the world we *pray* will be.

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