THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT
Matt. 18:21-35

MAIN THOUGHT The world’s worst torture is the prison of an unforgiving heart (Col. 3:13).

INTRODUCTION (21-22).

• After being taught to forgive one another (15), Peter generously (the Pharisees would forgive only twice) suggested up to seven times (5:20).
• Jesus taught UNLIMITED forgiveness (1 Cor. 13:5) – 77 times (or 7x7=490).

AS A DEBTOR (23-27).

• A man owed his king 10,000 talents – an enormous sum (interest undoubtedly had accrued) in the tens of millions of dollars (all of Israel paid only 800 talents each year). Because he was unable to pay it back, he and his family were to be sold into slavery (Lev. 25:39-41).
• His response exhibited (1) INSINCERE SORROW (Heb. 12:17; 2 Cor. 7:10) – he was sorry he got caught; and (2) PRIDE – “I can pay it back in time.”
• The king took PITY (GK = bowels – depth of feeling; compassion; 9:36; 20:34; Luke 15:20) on him and his impossible situation. He forgave him (GK = aphiemi - let loose).

AS A CREDITOR (28-30).

• In stark contrast, the unmerciful servant found one of his debtors who owed him a small amount – a few dollars (100 denarii). With no compassion or dignity, he CHOKED him and DEMANDED repayment.
• The poor man asked for patience to repay the small sum. He refused.
• He had the poor man thrown into prison. He may have had the LEGAL right to do this but not the MORAL right.

AS A PRISONER (31-34).

• Realizing they could be next, the poor man’s fellow servants became whistle blowers (Num. 32:23). They reported the double standard (Pro. 20:23).
• The unmerciful servant was held to account by the king and was condemned as wicked (24:48-51).
• This man had RECEIVED but never truly EXPERIENCED forgiveness for he was never truly repentant. How different was the Apostle Paul. He is the shining example a single standard (Acts 26:15-20). He was a doer (Jam. 1:22).
• The wicked servant was TORTURED (beaten – bloody back; Rev. 20:10) until he payed back all that was owed.

APPLICATION (35). Because we have been forgiven by God, we are to forgive one another from the heart – sincerely (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

Most famous Holocaust poem of all time, "First They Came for the Jews," was written by Martin Niemöller, a Lutheran pastor and theologian who was born in Germany in 1892. At one time a supporter of Hitler’s policies, he eventually recanted and as a result was arrested and confined to the Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps from 1938 to 1945. After narrowly avoiding execution at the hands of the Nazis, he was liberated by the Allies in 1945 and continued his career in Germany as a clergyman, pacifist and anti-war activist.

FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE JEWS
by Martin Niemöller

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.