

Dealing with our Debts
(Rev. Rob Heffernan)

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” — Matthew 6:12

This line you may have recited in grade school from the Lord’s Prayer. Interesting to note, we typically say, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who’ve trespassed against us.” The more correct translation is debt, not trespass.

A trespass is actually doing something wrong, like trespassing on someone’s property, While a debt is not doing something you should have done and therefore owe God or have fallen short of His standards. The latter is more fitting with the human spiritual predicament uttered by the Apostle Paul: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23).

When you do something you should not, by implication you’ve been spending your time on not doing what you should have been doing. If you’re not going forward, you are going backwards.

Nonetheless, the point here is that God in Christ forgives debts. And at this time of year when your credit card bill comes back after all of your Christmas shopping, the debts can pile up and overwhelm even the strongest of us. We owe these companies money and then the interest that will compound on top of that money.

In my opinion, our economy, as one aspect of our world, is graceless. It doesn’t forgive debt; rather, it punishes the debtor. God does not do so.

Perhaps you were tempted – heavily- to buy things you should not get and don’t really need. A perceived need was created in your mind through brilliant advertising that spent millions studying your habits in order to achieve a sale of something they were trying to sell. And then one month later, the toys are sitting in your living room because the kids are bored of them and you wonder how you even got duped in the first place.

It is important that we learn lessons in the area of financial stewardship along with contentment with what we already have. Christmas tells about the God of the universe extending grace to a broken world to set the captives free. In the words of Jesus, “He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoner and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,” (Luke 4:18).

Our fallen culture is using this attitude, this lifestyle to bind us up and financially oppress us. Go figure!

Well, there’s good news. Not only is the Bible full of helpful financial advice (see www.crown.org) and spiritual insights to overcome the temptations we face,

but it also tells us that God is not like our profit-driven world. God wants to forgive all of your debts — mistakes, regrets, past hurts, etc. so that you can be free again.

His gift, the Christ-child, was sent for that reason. So in the aftermath of your shopping spree, please remember that God forgives debts and wants to help you to avoid them next Christmas season and every day of your life.