

MATTHEW 18:21-35

*Be
Merciful
As I Am*

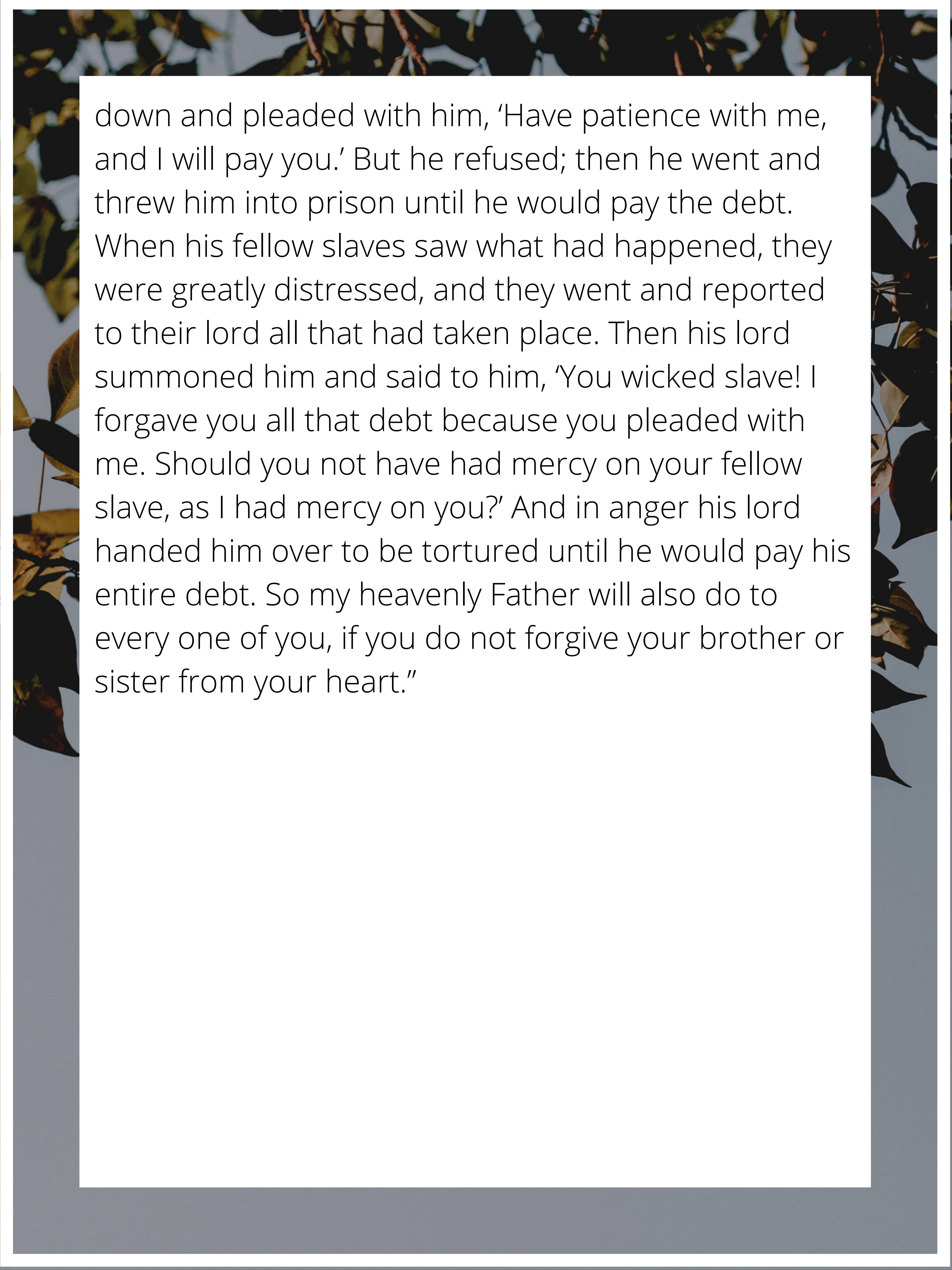
REV. IN KEE KIM

Scripture Passage

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell



down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

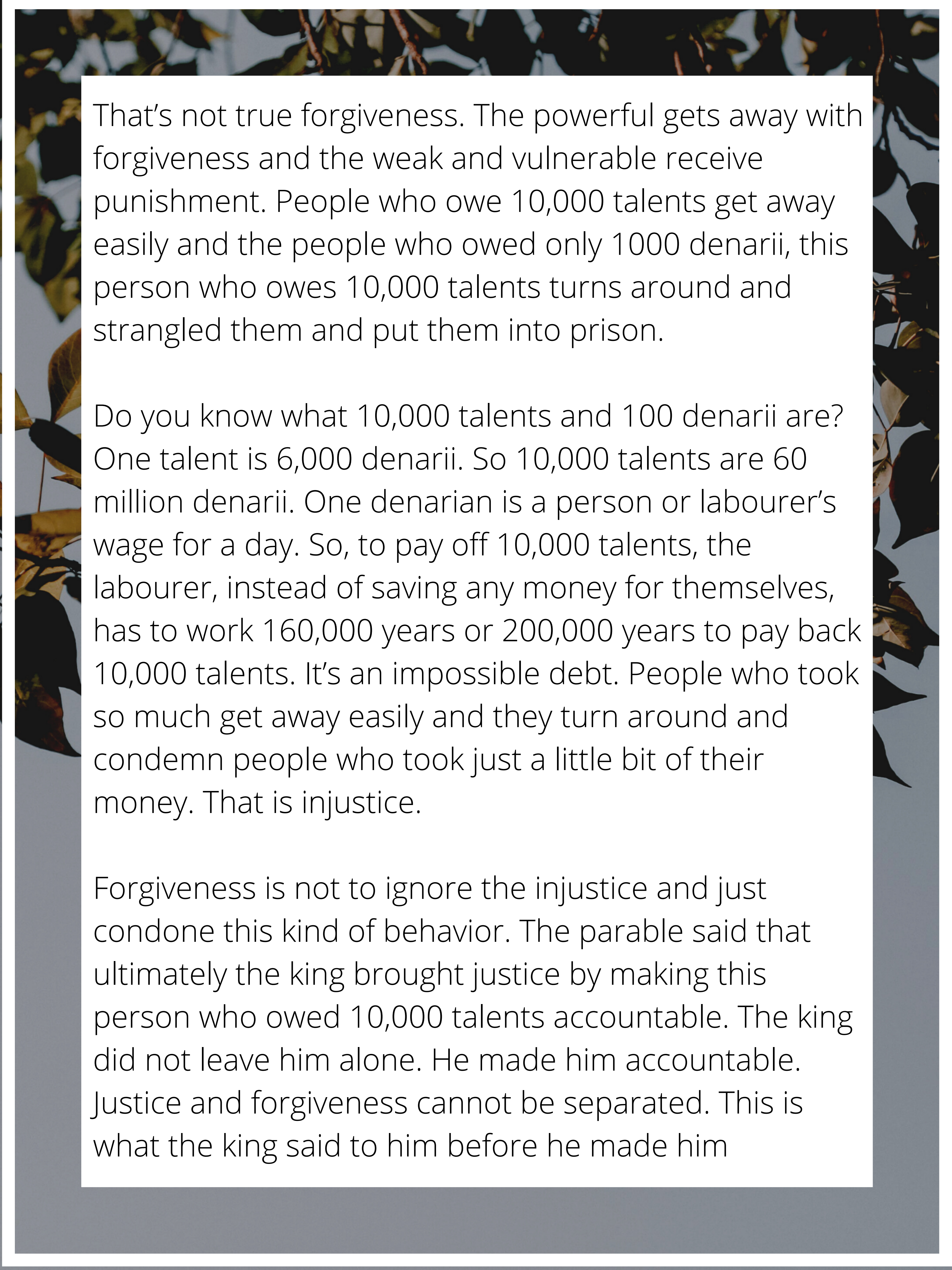
Sermon

Be Merciful As I Am

The word forgiveness is a very familiar word. We have heard it all the time in our lives. Especially in a church and as Christians, we believe that forgiveness is at the core of our belief. We always say Jesus died on the cross to forgive us. We have heard this phrase thousands of times. After Jesus resurrected from the dead, the last word he said to the disciples was about forgiveness. He said, ***“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (John 20:23)*** Jesus gave them the authority to forgive and also the responsibility to forgive.

Injustice and Forgiveness

We hear it all the time, we value it, and we think it is important. But it's one of those things, we hear it but we don't see it. We hear so much about it but we don't see the face of forgiveness. We don't see peace and reconciliation that come from forgiveness. We see only conflicts and division that come from hostility. We also see injustice and inequality in the name of forgiveness.

The background of the entire page is a photograph of autumn leaves. The leaves are in various shades of yellow, orange, and brown, some with green still visible. They are scattered across the frame, with some in sharp focus and others blurred, creating a textured, naturalistic backdrop. The lighting appears to be natural, possibly from a window, casting soft shadows and highlights on the leaves.

That's not true forgiveness. The powerful gets away with forgiveness and the weak and vulnerable receive punishment. People who owe 10,000 talents get away easily and the people who owed only 1000 denarii, this person who owes 10,000 talents turns around and strangled them and put them into prison.

Do you know what 10,000 talents and 100 denarii are? One talent is 6,000 denarii. So 10,000 talents are 60 million denarii. One denarian is a person or labourer's wage for a day. So, to pay off 10,000 talents, the labourer, instead of saving any money for themselves, has to work 160,000 years or 200,000 years to pay back 10,000 talents. It's an impossible debt. People who took so much get away easily and they turn around and condemn people who took just a little bit of their money. That is injustice.

Forgiveness is not to ignore the injustice and just condone this kind of behavior. The parable said that ultimately the king brought justice by making this person who owed 10,000 talents accountable. The king did not leave him alone. He made him accountable. Justice and forgiveness cannot be separated. This is what the king said to him before he made him

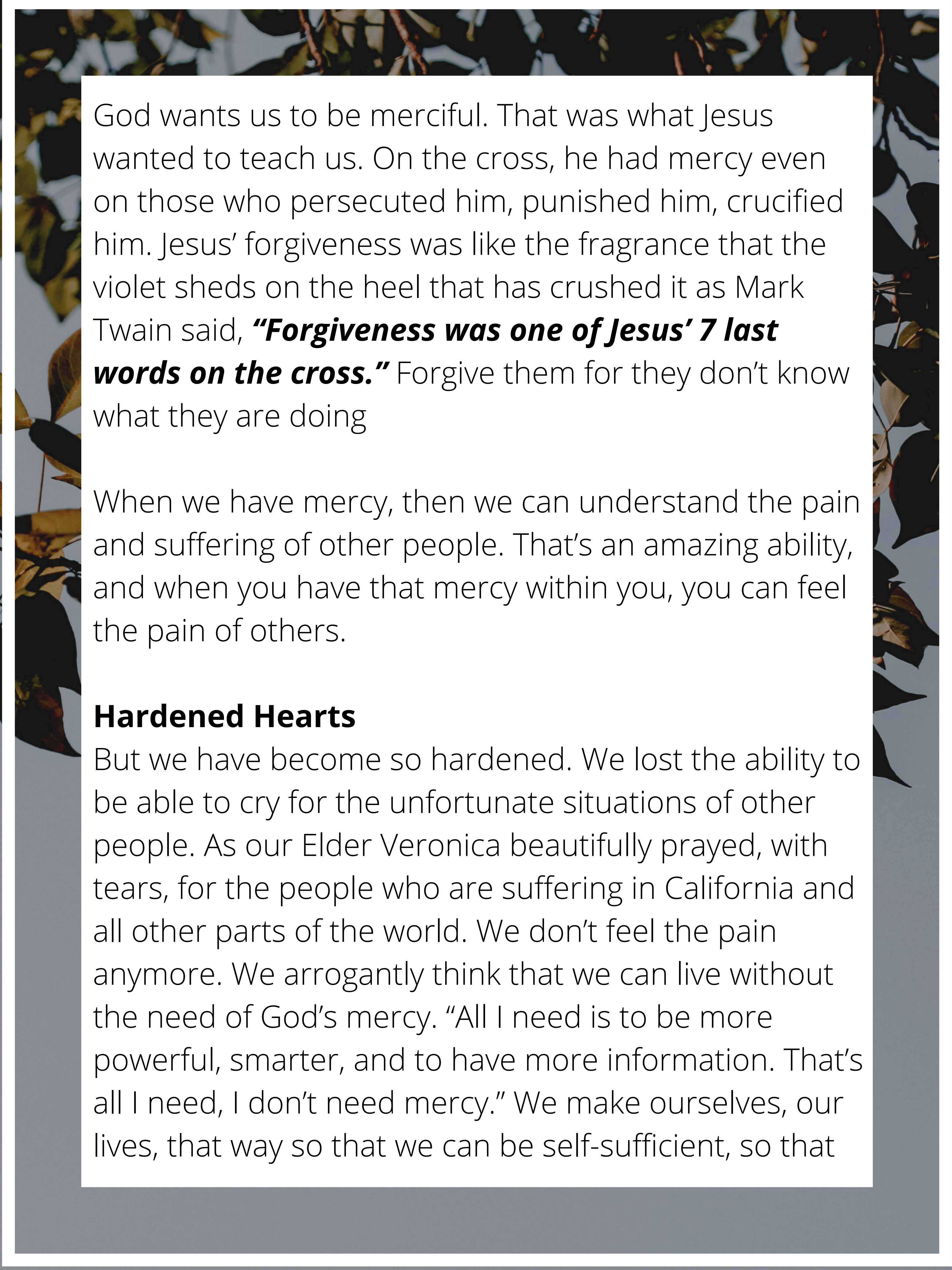
accountable, ***“Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?”*** (Matthew 18:33)

To Have Mercy

Mercy - that is what is important. Mercy is what he lacked. Mercy is having compassion for those who suffer. But this man never learned what it meant to be merciful, even though he received so much mercy from the king. He was incapable of understanding the pain and the suffering of other people. Very sad, but I see humanity in my own time – no mercy, no feeling for the pain of others. Everyone has become so selfish and so self-centered, and we don't feel for the pain of others. No mercy.

The Three Pillars of Life

The prophet Micah told us three things of what God requires of us. Those three things are like the three pillars of life. This is what he said, ***“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*** (Micah 6:8) These three things are the pillars of life – act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God. This man who owed 10,000 talents lacked all of that.

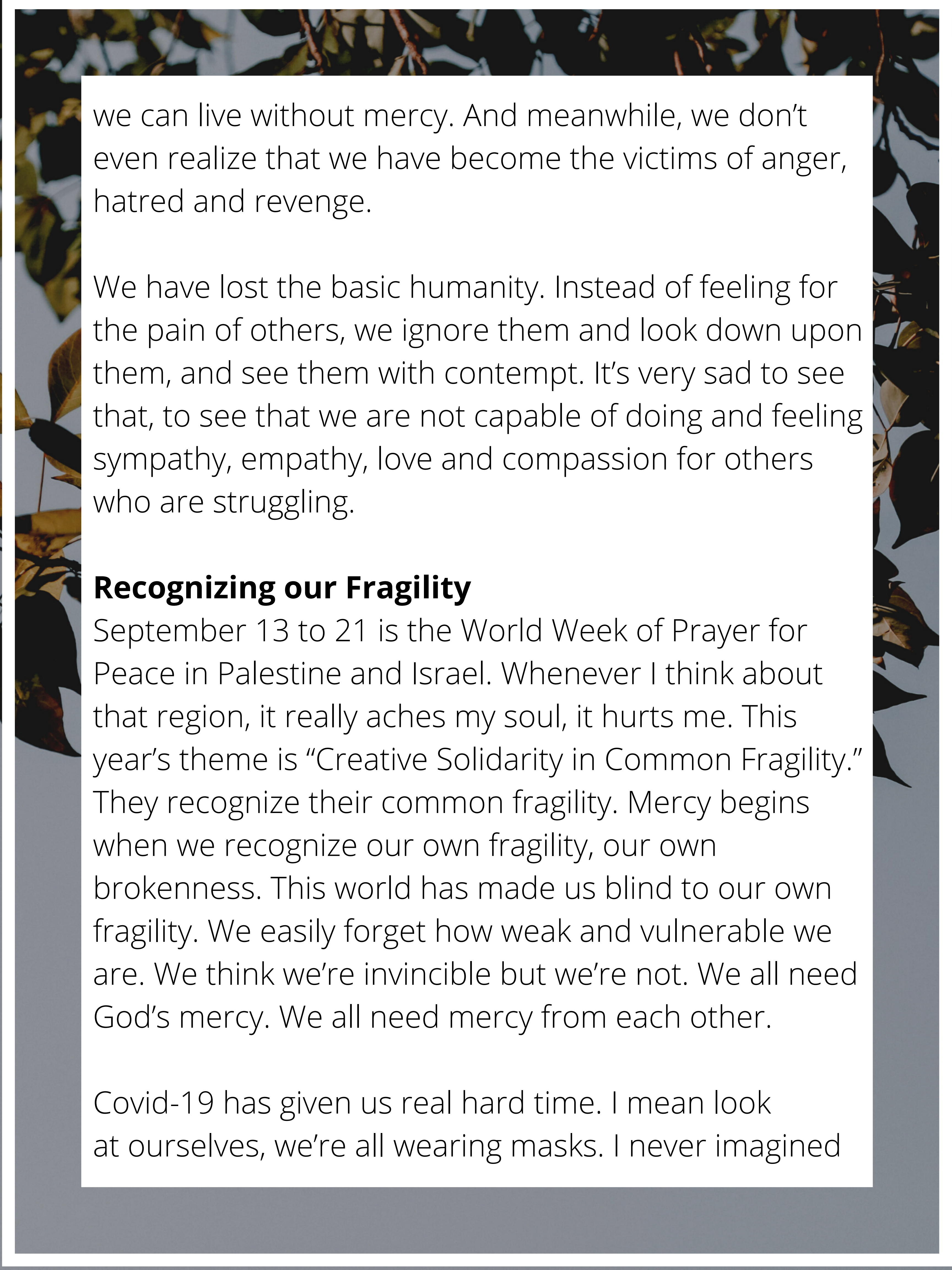


God wants us to be merciful. That was what Jesus wanted to teach us. On the cross, he had mercy even on those who persecuted him, punished him, crucified him. Jesus' forgiveness was like the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it as Mark Twain said, ***"Forgiveness was one of Jesus' 7 last words on the cross."*** Forgive them for they don't know what they are doing

When we have mercy, then we can understand the pain and suffering of other people. That's an amazing ability, and when you have that mercy within you, you can feel the pain of others.

Hardened Hearts

But we have become so hardened. We lost the ability to be able to cry for the unfortunate situations of other people. As our Elder Veronica beautifully prayed, with tears, for the people who are suffering in California and all other parts of the world. We don't feel the pain anymore. We arrogantly think that we can live without the need of God's mercy. "All I need is to be more powerful, smarter, and to have more information. That's all I need, I don't need mercy." We make ourselves, our lives, that way so that we can be self-sufficient, so that

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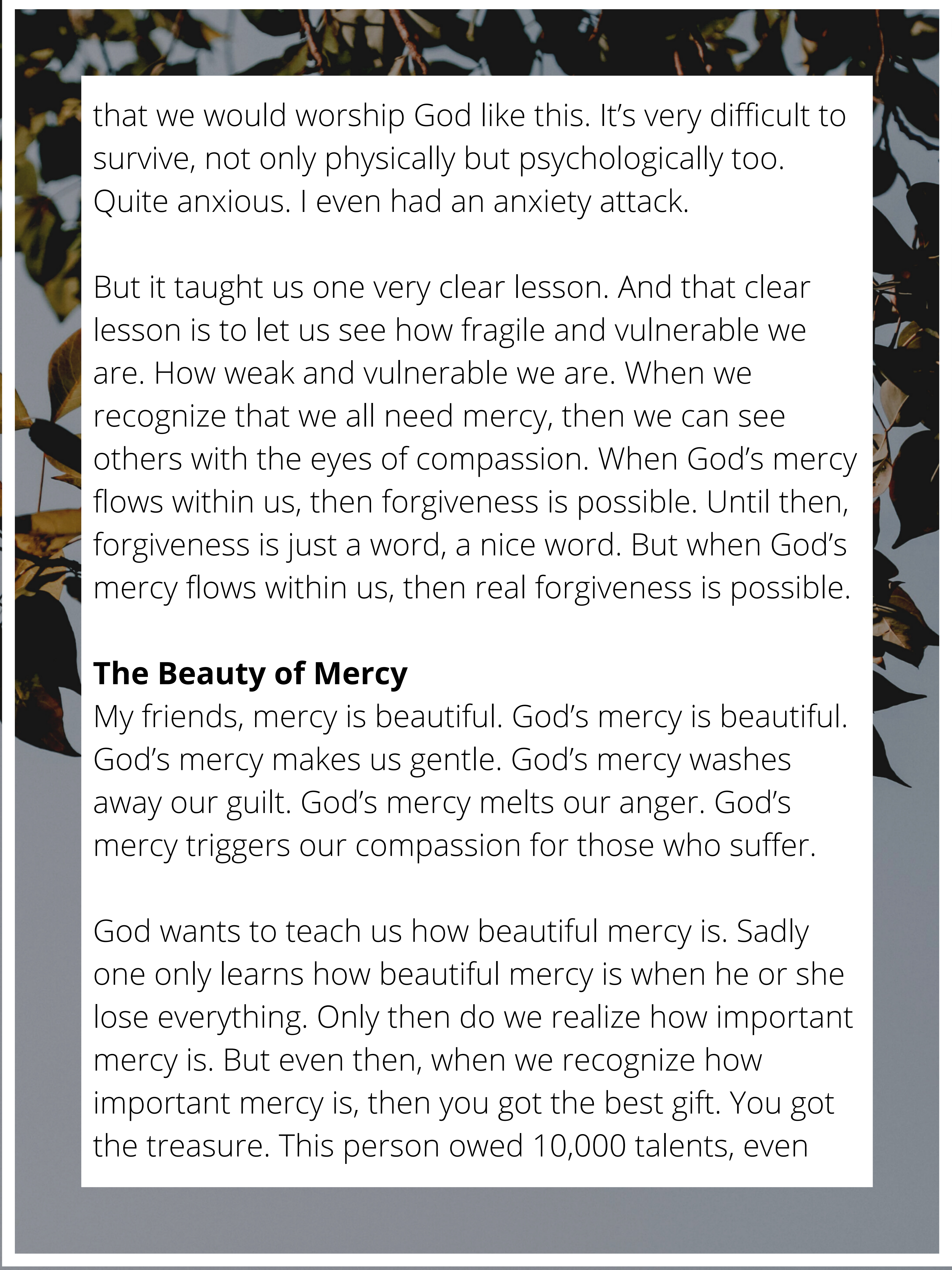
we can live without mercy. And meanwhile, we don't even realize that we have become the victims of anger, hatred and revenge.

We have lost the basic humanity. Instead of feeling for the pain of others, we ignore them and look down upon them, and see them with contempt. It's very sad to see that, to see that we are not capable of doing and feeling sympathy, empathy, love and compassion for others who are struggling.

Recognizing our Fragility

September 13 to 21 is the World Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine and Israel. Whenever I think about that region, it really aches my soul, it hurts me. This year's theme is "Creative Solidarity in Common Fragility." They recognize their common fragility. Mercy begins when we recognize our own fragility, our own brokenness. This world has made us blind to our own fragility. We easily forget how weak and vulnerable we are. We think we're invincible but we're not. We all need God's mercy. We all need mercy from each other.

Covid-19 has given us real hard time. I mean look at ourselves, we're all wearing masks. I never imagined

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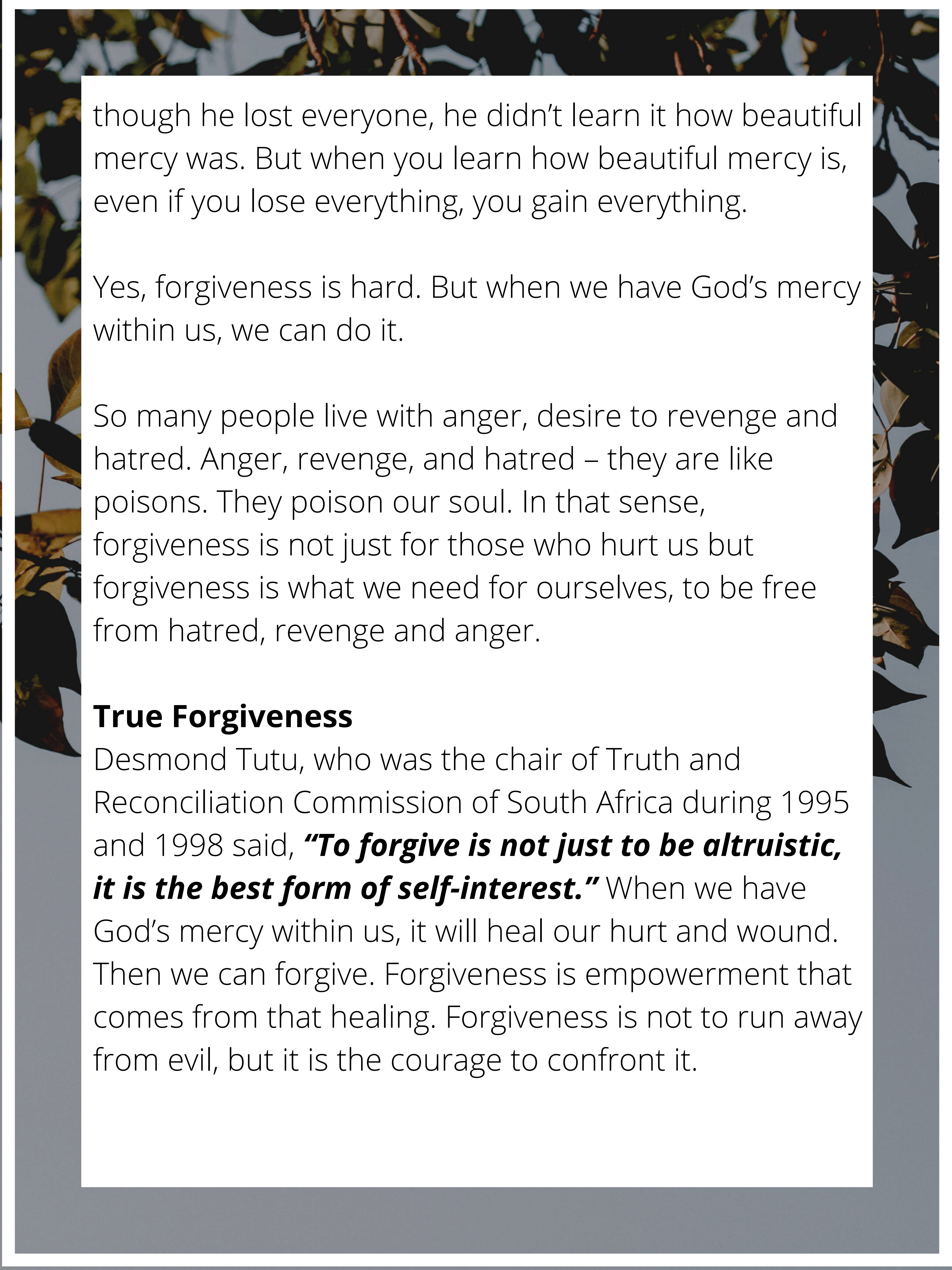
that we would worship God like this. It's very difficult to survive, not only physically but psychologically too. Quite anxious. I even had an anxiety attack.

But it taught us one very clear lesson. And that clear lesson is to let us see how fragile and vulnerable we are. How weak and vulnerable we are. When we recognize that we all need mercy, then we can see others with the eyes of compassion. When God's mercy flows within us, then forgiveness is possible. Until then, forgiveness is just a word, a nice word. But when God's mercy flows within us, then real forgiveness is possible.

The Beauty of Mercy

My friends, mercy is beautiful. God's mercy is beautiful. God's mercy makes us gentle. God's mercy washes away our guilt. God's mercy melts our anger. God's mercy triggers our compassion for those who suffer.

God wants to teach us how beautiful mercy is. Sadly one only learns how beautiful mercy is when he or she lose everything. Only then do we realize how important mercy is. But even then, when we recognize how important mercy is, then you got the best gift. You got the treasure. This person owed 10,000 talents, even

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though he lost everyone, he didn't learn it how beautiful mercy was. But when you learn how beautiful mercy is, even if you lose everything, you gain everything.

Yes, forgiveness is hard. But when we have God's mercy within us, we can do it.

So many people live with anger, desire to revenge and hatred. Anger, revenge, and hatred – they are like poisons. They poison our soul. In that sense, forgiveness is not just for those who hurt us but forgiveness is what we need for ourselves, to be free from hatred, revenge and anger.

True Forgiveness

Desmond Tutu, who was the chair of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa during 1995 and 1998 said, ***“To forgive is not just to be altruistic, it is the best form of self-interest.”*** When we have God's mercy within us, it will heal our hurt and wound. Then we can forgive. Forgiveness is empowerment that comes from that healing. Forgiveness is not to run away from evil, but it is the courage to confront it.



Let us be merciful. Let us live a life of mercy. You will be blessed. Jesus taught us, ***“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*** (Luke 6:36)