

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

Many years ago, an old Pennsylvania Quaker had a bundle of hides stolen from his warehouse. He wondered what he could do to keep this from happening again. Instead of reporting the incident to the police, he placed the following ad in the newspapers: "Whoever stole those hides on the 5th of this month is informed that the owner wants to be your friend. If poverty tempted you to steal, the owner will keep the whole situation secret and will help you to get money in a more suitable way."

A few nights later, when the family was ready to go to bed, a man knocked at the door of the Quaker's house, carrying with him a bundle of skins. "I brought back your hides," he said. "It's the first time I ever stole anything, and I've felt guilty ever since."

"Let it be the last time, friend." said the Quaker. "The secret will stay with us." He spoke to the man kindly about the foolishness of dishonesty and of the blessings of the grace of Jesus. He also hired the former thief, who became a changed man, living an exemplary life from then on.

Romans 6:14, 18 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ... and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

The thief in our story really deserved punishment, not mercy. He deserved to be arrested and prosecuted; taught a lesson for his crime. And there are times when this is indeed the best thing to do, if you're dealing with a hardened and unrepentant offender. But not in this case. The Quaker chose the path of grace and the thief experienced a double grace that day; the grace of a forgiving Quaker, and the grace of God through Jesus Christ. He was twice touched by the merciful hand of God. And you can be too. That's what Lent is all about. Receive God's grace in Christ today.