

Sermon Notes October 2nd, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 17:5-10

Scripture

17:5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

17:6 The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

17:7 "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'?"

17:8 Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'?"

17:9 Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?"

17:10 So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

Sermon

Last week, we ended in chapter sixteen as Jesus was sharing the parable about the rich man and Lazarus. If you were at the first service or listened to my message on line, you should remember that I asked you to place yourselves into the shoes of the rich man's brother. We have the opportunity to write the ending of the story. While we are on this earth, what are we going to do to help those that we encounter on a daily basis.

This morning, we turn the chapter and are hearing Jesus speak to his disciples about faith. However, when we turned the chapter, the lectionary writers thought that it was appropriate to start in verse five, the key question. However, the key question comes because of what happened in the first four verses. Thus, I am going to take a step back and share with you those four verses. Listen in:

1-2 He said to his disciples, "Hard trials and temptations are bound to come, but too bad for whoever brings them on! Better to wear a concrete vest and take a swim with the fishes than give even one of these dear little ones a hard time!"

3-4 "Be alert. If you see your friend going wrong, correct him. If he responds, forgive him. Even if it's personal against you and repeated seven times through the day, and seven times he says, 'I'm sorry, I won't do it again,' forgive him."

I am pretty sure the disciples were thinking, whoa Jesus, those are some tough words. Can you increase our faith so we can accomplish that task? That is when Jesus shared the two examples that we read today.

There are multiple ways that we can hear these words. This morning, I want us to hear them through the lens of encouragement. I have heard sermons and bible lessons where this text has been used as a scolding text. They highlight the component, "if you just had enough faith, you could fill in the blank."

But maybe we can see that what Jesus was really saying to his disciples is that there is no real value in worry too much about whether you've got enough faith or whether you could have more faith. Jesus then could be flipping the question back around to them and asking them: "Are you living faithful with what you have?" This question should not be a scary question for us to answer.

I want to remind you of some very important news this morning. Each and everyone of us was created in the Image of God. Because of that, we know the difference between love and hate. We understand the difference between faithful and betrayal. All of us have been created with the capacity to continue the journey of growth. We can live into love, truth, being a peaceful person, and have a sense of wholeness.

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I think that the world often shakes their head at Christianity because faithfulness and integrity should be taken for granted. It's what we have been created for. It's what we are called to do. It's our job, just like Jesus was sharing about the servant.

When I think about Jesus speaking to the disciples, I think that Jesus was trying to get them to realize that this is not rocket science. It really is not that tough. He is looking at them as they ask about having their faith being increased and he is wanting to know what they are doing with the faith that has been given to them. What would happen if they and now us, simply did the nuts and bolts of humanity. When I think about the nuts and bolts, I am taken back to the minor prophets. The two that come to the forefront of my mind are Amos and Micah. We heard from Amos on Wednesday and I have Micah's words tattooed on my left forearm. Hear their words, that I believe are the nuts and bolts of life.

In Amos, God is speaking:

Do you know what I want? I want justice—oceans of it. I want fairness—rivers of it. That's what I want. That's all I want.

In Micah, we hear him telling those who would listen the following:

But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do, what God is looking for in men and women. It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, And don't take yourself too seriously—take God seriously.

Friends, you have more than enough faith for all of these things. We, as a church, have more than enough to make a huge impact in our community. Both the community inside these walls and the community that lives outside of these walls. In essence, Christian discipleship is not something extra. It truly is about us living out the meaning of our humanity; growing into what we have been created to become.

I am hoping that those words begin to open a few new doors as we hear the words that Jesus gave his disciples and the words that we heard today. It is very important for us to remember that these stories are part of a larger narrative. We need to remember that Luke-Acts is a two-volume set. In these books we take a journey from the good news that Jesus shared to the growing pains that the Jews-Gentiles had in their relationships. Then we encounter the stories of the early church and all the challenges that they faced. They were able to overcome, even though their faith was so small. God continued to work through them and God continues to work through us. By faith, the disciples found world-altering power and we have that power as well.

If we can, I want to make a shift and I want to share some news with you regarding language because language can be a tricky thing; right? We read the word faith in the text and I have been preaching to you about faith and how that plays out in our daily lives.

What if, this is really not about faith?

Stop the presses, right? What do you mean that this might not be about faith. The Greek word is *pistis*. It is not wrong to translate it faith and that is what the translators chose. However, the word can also be translated as trust, confidence or commitment. If you would use one of those three words instead of faith, how does it change your thinking?

I like the word commitment. When you look at the life of these disciples that Jesus is talking to, they have left their homes, their jobs and their families to follow Jesus. That is commitment. It has not been an easy journey for them. As they have traveled with Jesus, there has been numerous moments of hostility because individuals opposed Jesus and his teachings. Now, they are headed to Jerusalem for his death, even though they don't fully grasp what is happening and they are still with him on his final journey.

Yet, their faith or commitment wavers. They truly want to stay the course. I think many, most, or all of us can relate. There is turmoil and fear in our lives and the lives of our churches; we get overwhelmed by

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terror. I always think about them on the water and the storm is raging, they are terrified and Jesus is asleep. Being “close” to Jesus does not guarantee that our faith/commitment will not waver.

This is what I am trying to learn and what I want to challenge you to wrestle with. Faith is not letting fear get the upper hand. Faith is about being willing to take risks that challenge the status quo. Then, because I am preaching through the baptismal promises, Faith is having confidence in God’s desire for justice. Justice. Remember in the baptismal waters, we have promised to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?” Then, faith is having the willingness to ask Jesus for what we need.

Let me close the sermon out with some words that I read this week that really stood out to me. May they touch you like they touched me:

In a culture enamored by sensationalist news and highlight reels, it is easy to question our faith when it does not feel extraordinary. To be sure, there is nothing wrong with a mountaintop experience. But the most mundane act of faith carries extraordinary potential for transforming the world into the image of its Creator. I am reminded of the great Catholic saints of the mundane, André of Montreal (who worked as a monastery porter, sacristan, and launderer) and John the Gardener (who assisted his local monastery in gardening duties, including the altar flowers). By approaching each ordinary task as an opportunity to live their faith, they discovered the extraordinary depth of God’s love for them and for the seemingly ordinary (but quite extraordinary!) people around them.

Friends, our faith journey is all about Loving God and Loving Others, may we make a commitment to live out that journey. **Amen.**