

## Scripture Reading:

Luke 17:1-19 “1 Then [Jesus] said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3 Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." 5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. 7 And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? 8 But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. 10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.' " 11 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. 13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. 17 So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? 18 Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."”

# *"Faith & Duty"*

This morning we continue our journey through the Gospel of Luke and we come to the end of the study sheet we have been following for the past few weeks. We have focused on how Jesus interacted with the multitudes, the religious leaders and His disciples. Jesus now turns to His disciples with some critical lessons on faith and duty and we will see Jesus mainly focus on His disciples and these lessons during the remaining days or weeks of this journey to Jerusalem

- Jesus first gives His disciples a strong warning again to avoid the “leaven of the Pharisees”

“Then [Jesus] said to the disciples, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!” What offenses is Jesus talking about?

The very ones practiced by the Scribes and Pharisees that Jesus has been warning them about: In chapter 11, Jesus challenged both the Scribes and Pharisees with just such offenses: Luke 11:46 “Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ... 52 Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”

- Offenses have come and they have come from those who should have been the shepherds of Israel.

So how bad is the “woe” for those who bring such offenses? “It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”

- Hard to miss that image

In verse three Jesus gives His disciples a very stark contrast with those who bring offense:

- These false shepherds of Israel bring offenses: Traps!
- As brothers & sisters in the Lord, we are to bring salvation!

Jesus said to His disciples, “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.” This is quite different from what we often see today... I grow a little weary of Christians being concerned with whether they have offended me or sinned against me and come looking for my forgiveness.

- I say this because if they really have sinned against me and I practice what Jesus says here and go to rebuke them, they are more often than not “offended” by my attitude!

Here in Luke Jesus sets a low bar for earning our forgiveness... repent!

Jesus sets a high the bar on forgiving: “And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

- The applications here need to be very practical, especially in our homes!

How many times should we lovingly correct a child during the day for the same offense?

I often hear parents trying follow the Biblical pattern of correction say “it is not working” Usually when the child continues to do the same thing over and over and over AND over!

- Such trials remind us of the hardness of men’s hearts AND we should take these opportunities to demonstrate how our God is a gracious forgiving God!

Husbands are commanded to love their wives: So if I have a bad habit that is unloving, my wife should rebuke me and I should repent and she should forgive.

IF it is a bad habit I might fall right back into that sin in short order... That does not mean it is time for marriage counseling...

- NO! It means we need to practice what Jesus teaches here.

How many times do you have to forgive your husband for leaving the dirty clothes on the floor when he says he is sorry? Men how many times do we have to forgive our wives for moving that VERY important pile that you had right where you knew where it was, if she says she is sorry? If you want a strong marriage for many, many years, these are lessons that must be learned

How many tensions would be relieved in the workplace if believers practiced this with each other?

And yes, it would certainly improve the community life in our churches.

- The disciples are overwhelmed by this teaching, as we should be!
- They respond by making a simple request: “increase our faith”
- Something we should request often as well!
- It is here that we should begin to see the proper relationship between “faith” and “duty”

Jesus quickly explains that they do not need a LOT of faith, just the right kind of faith: The faith that is a gift from God! Jesus says if you have this faith, then even though it be as tiny as a mustard seed, you could pull up this massive tree and cast it into the sea!

Now obviously, we don't have faith so we can throw around trees or move mountains... But Jesus uses these examples to show the power of God's gracious gift.

Paul explains how this faith is critical to our Christian walk from the beginning to the end in both Romans and Colossians. In Romans 1:16 we have those famous words, “16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith!”

Paul explains how righteousness is revealed from faith to faith in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of his Epistle to the church at Colossi: 2:6 “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

- I can tell you from first hand experience that this is a simple yet profound lesson that we must come back to over and over again!
- This is what Jesus is doing with His disciples in these closing days or weeks of this journey.

Jesus then uses a real world example & one of His miracles to demonstrate how we are to be thankful servants in response to this great gift of faith!

As Paul said, “abounding in thanksgiving!”

Jesus begins by reminding them that we are unprofitable servants.

- This does not mean that what we do in our Christian life has no benefit... but it does mean it has no merit

Just as a slave could not come to a master at the end of the day and demand a paycheck for the services that he rendered, so we cannot bring ANY of our works to God and expect that He owes us something!

Jesus then looks to some lepers to demonstrate to His disciples the importance of thankfulness. This also serves as another warning to the Scribes and Pharisees who Jesus will turn His attention to briefly again next week. [explain what happens with the lepers]

Once again it is the Samaritan who shows thankfulness... Would also have reminded them of the gentile commander Naaman whose leprosy was cured after he got over his pride: [ *II Kings 5 can be your homework!* ]

- We have received the gift of faith & we must be a thankful people!
- I want to conclude by looking again at the concept of being unprofitable servants...

Human slavery has existed from the time of Adam's fall to some extent or another. We are blessed to live in a time and nation where it is very rare, but that makes it more difficult for us to see what is being taught here.

The influence of the Gospel in the West has brought a respect for private property and more importantly a respect for the labor of ones hands. This in turn has brought a greater respect for labor and greatly increased productivity... What we once called the Protestant work ethic. So if I work for you for six hours at an agreed upon price, at the end of that time you owe me some money!

The example that Jesus uses is one of slavery, where a servant works for a master who has control over all of his labor, so at the end of the day he cannot go to that master and say, you owe me so much money for the hours that I have worked!

In fact, in the example Jesus even shows that the servant has no time to himself until all of his duties have been fulfilled. Now PLEASE note, Jesus is NOT telling us this because He is a slave master, but rather so we will not be confused as to who gets credit for the good works that we have been created in Christ Jesus to walk in!

This goes back to what we learned last week about seeing the Gospel in the Law and the Prophets. Many even today think there is a major tension between "law" and "gospel"

The Bible does not put them at odds with each other: We see this in the lessons today about Faith & Duty

Faith & Duty flow together just as the Law and the Gospel do in the Scriptures.

In Romans, Paul explains how we are justified by faith alone, but then tells the skeptics that the Gospel has not made void the Law but rather has established it or fulfilled it!

Think about it this way...

We do not have “show & tell” at the beginning of the worship service where we proudly testify about what good things we have done this past week!

NO, we have a time of confession where we admit that through our sins of omission and commission we have fallen short of the righteous standard God has set in His Law: We certainly have NOT fulfilled the Law!

When our absolution is proclaimed, we rejoice that Jesus has paid the price for these sins and that despite our miserable performance, God looks down at us as His righteous people... seeing His Law as fulfilled!

This is why King David, who we certainly know had his shortcomings, could near the end of his life, as he presenting gifts before God say,

“I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness [IE the Law]. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things”

- David understood that despite all of His many sins, God looked at him as a righteous servant
- It is the same with us EACH week as we bring our gifts & prayers before God as His righteous people!

Because Jesus came to save His people from their sins, we serve today as God’s righteous servants... He can have no others!

This does not mean that we receive no rewards or kind words from Jesus, it just means we must be thankful and we have to remember who gets the credit: Calvin said it well: “rewards are promised not as debt, but from the mere good pleasure of God!”

There is no better picture of this than in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation where we see elders sitting on thrones with crowns of gold as their reward:

Revelation 4:9 “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 11 “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

This is the heavenly picture of what Jesus was demonstrating with His story of the servants doing a days labor for their master because that was their duty.

- When Faith & Duty are properly understood it changes how we live our lives:

As I said at the beginning this is not complicated: As Paul told the Colossian Saints, ‘as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, walk also in Him’

- Faithful works are those we do because we know who we are and what is expected of us!

Suddenly we don't wade through the mundane affairs of daily life hoping and praying that God might someday greatly use us for His Kingdom.

The faithful wife who lives out the instructions of Proverbs 31 is serving in God's Kingdom right where she is supposed to be: And don't glamorize that chapter: It includes getting up early and lots of work: Cooking & cleaning & sowing & teaching

When you get up the next day, you have those same dishes to wash, floors to clean, clothing to mend and the same children to instruct!

And oh yes, I forgot the toughest job which is being a good helpmeet to her husband so he can be a good witness at the gate!

And husbands we must remember the same principles: Remembering that great line from dad in Chariots of Fire where he tells his sons that they can "peel a spud to the Glory of God if they peel it well!"

Again it is no accident that we have seen the great industrial, technological and intellectual advancements that have come from Western civilization in the past few hundred years.

Christian men and even those who simply lived under the once strong influence of Christian nations took seriously their work: Seeing the worth in common labor, doing it to the glory of God, and dreaming of great things as their God allowed them to take dominion over the whole earth!

Obviously, much of this has been lost, but we can begin to recapture it by just changing how we go to work tomorrow morning!

I would also mention here what I discussed earlier about being faithful in the raising of our children...

God gives us clear commands on how they are to be instructed & disciplined:

Moses says: "You shall teach [the Lord's statutes and judgments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

This is NOT an isolated 'proof-text'... Consider the entire first ten chapters of Deuteronomy and then the entire Book of Proverbs!

There is NO substitute for this instruction from the parents... NO schools, no experts, no programs, not even the church can be substitutes for what God has given as the duty of parents!

It is in Proverbs where we are instructed about the discipline of our children: Here we find that God tells us to use the rod, consistently and lovingly to save the souls of our children from hell:

Again, there is NO substitute: No time-outs, no rewards & punishments, no experts and certainly no politicians or bureaucrats can do what again is given to parents as their duty!

So as we disciple our covenant children there are many diapers to change and dishes to wash. There are many hours to be worked and tasks to repeat. There are many instructions and corrections to be given to our dear children...

- All should be done in faith & seen as our duty!

AND when we have faithfully done them all, we must understand that we are unprofitable servants... God owes us nothing in return.

- We have only done those tasks which were our duty to do!

However, we perform these duties not for a human slave master, but for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who has poured out His great love on us making us ready and willing servants.

- Servants who are also called friends, yea, Saints who have become the Bride of Christ!

Servants who understand that as we fulfill our duties the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus will fill the whole earth!

Please know that as we “hear & do” what Jesus has taught us about ‘faith & duty’ it will truly change how we approach even the most mundane or repetitious tasks we are called on to do this week!

#### Communion Meditation:

Psalm 34 - 3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together. 4 I sought the Lord, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. 8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! 9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.