

Luke 17:1-19

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[0 : 00] Amen. It's a good prayer as we come to God's Word that the Holy Spirit would speak through it and speak to our hearts and minds. Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 17. We are looking at chapter 17, verses 1 to 19 tonight.

So, I'm going to read those for us, and then we're going to sort of walk through this section together.

Luke 17, if you're looking at the Bible, it's page 876, so let me read this. And Jesus said to his disciples, Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come.

It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.

Pay attention to yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, I repent, you must forgive him.

[1 : 15] The apostle said to the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, Be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you.

Will any one of you who has a servant, plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, Come at once and recline at table? Will he not rather say to him, Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink?

Does he thank the servant, because he did what was commanded? So you also. When you have done all that you were commanded, say, We are unworthy servants.

We have only done what was our duty. On the way to Jerusalem, he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee, and as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance, and lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

When he saw them, he said to them, Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.

[2 : 34] Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?

And he said to him, Rise and go your way. Your faith has made you well. So this summer, we've been doing a series in the Gospel of Luke, the middle section, and we're coming toward the end.

We have about a month to go. We'll go to the end of August, to chapter 19, but we're most of the way through. And so as I was preparing for tonight's sermon, I looked over the last six or seven chapters that we've been reading just to sort of see, you know, are there some themes, major themes that stick out and, you know, might they happen to appear in our passage tonight?

Now, if you were here for the first sermon in this series, Pastor Nick mentioned two themes, that Jesus is trying to teach his disciples as they're going along the road up to Jerusalem.

And the first theme is priority. That Jesus must be number one priority for his disciples and for us. That's the first thing Jesus taught them.

[3 : 48] When he called them, follow me, he says, nothing else can come ahead of your loyalty to me. He has to be number one priority.

The second theme that Pastor Nick mentioned was mercy. That Jesus is rich in mercy and he's teaching his disciples to also be merciful as God has shown mercy to them.

And lo and behold, I think these are the two major themes of tonight's passage as well. If you look at verse one to 10, as we go through those, we'll see the theme of priority. Jesus is saying to his disciples, if you're following me, I have to be number one.

You belong to me. I don't owe you. You owe me everything. But then what we see in the second half is that Jesus is a merciful Savior who gives us all that we need and even more.

So that's what we're going to see tonight. These two themes, once again, and we've seen these themes in several, if you look, if you think of some of the stories we've looked at, right, when Jesus is talking to Mary and Martha, sort of emphasizes the priority theme, you need to listen to me.

[5 : 00] When he talks about money, he says you either love money or you love God. You can't love both. One has to be the priority. In chapter 13, he says repent. Now is the time to repent and turn to God.

Don't delay. Today. Don't wait. But we've also seen Jesus is rich in mercy, right? The story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus calling his disciples to go and do likewise, to show that kind of mercy to people in need.

We've seen chapter 15, right, the story of the lost sheep and the lost coin and the lost son about God seeking out the lost and bringing them home. And that's what Jesus came to do, to seek us out when we were lost and bring us home by his mercy and grace.

And back in chapter 12, he said to us, don't be anxious because you have a heavenly father. Who loves you and knows you and will provide for you. So again, these themes have come up a lot.

So I think it's one of the major things Jesus wants us to go away with and that Jesus wanted to teach his disciples during this long journey they were taking to Jerusalem. So let's look at these themes in turn.

[6 : 08] First, the theme of priority. Verses 1 to 10. Now if you read verses 1 to 4, so you got verses 1 to 2 talk about temptations to sin or he's causing others to sin.

Verses 3 and 4 talk about what if someone sins against you? So sort of sin going both ways, right? Don't, if there's a warning, don't cause others to stumble.

Don't lead other people astray. And Jesus gives a very strong warning. He says it would be better to be drowned in the sea than to lead somebody else into sin.

Because sin is that dangerous. It's that spiritually perilous. It will lead to death. And Jesus is saying, be careful.

No. God's called you together to follow him together. So be careful that you don't lead others astray but instead lead others closer to Jesus.

[7 : 16] And we see, for example, the Apostle Paul applying this principle. If you read in Romans 14, we're not going to go there, but that's one place where the Apostle Paul applies this principle in reminding the Christians in Rome and he says, let's do everything that makes for peace and for building up the church.

Right? Be careful to build one another up and not tear each other down. And he uses the same thing. Don't cause your brother to stumble because Christ died for your brother.

But in verse 3 to 4, we see how Jesus tells us to respond if somebody sins against us. Right? Now, again, Jesus is realistic here. He doesn't say, well, if you're going to be my followers, you've got to be perfect.

He acknowledges, you know what? Somebody's going to sin against you and temptations to sin are sure to come. He's like, he's being very realistic. If you're looking for the perfect church, you'll never find it.

And if you ever found it, you'd spoil it. So, right? So, Jesus is very realistic. He says, you know, we're going to have to deal with things.

[8 : 27] Right? You might have a brother or sister in Christ who sins against you, who wrongs you. Right? Maybe they lie to you. Maybe they gossip behind your back.

Maybe they just are mean to you. Right? There's maybe, whatever, they get angry and blow up at you. There's going to be issues.

Right? And Jesus tells us how to deal with them. And he says two things. He says, first, if your brother or sister sins, rebuke them. Now, that means don't just sweep it under the rug.

Right? And don't be angry on the inside and say nothing to the person. Jesus says, no, there's a way to deal with things. Actually, he's following what God had already said to the Israelites in the Old Testament in Leviticus 19.17 where it says, don't hate your brother in your heart, but frankly, rebuke him or her.

Okay? So, don't sort of nurse a grudge against somebody who's done you wrong. Go to them. And Jesus says the same thing in Matthew 18. He says, go to them and rebuke them.

[9 : 37] And do that in love. Right? Because, of course, you can go and rebuke somebody in a very angry and hateful spirit. And Jesus is not encouraging that. So, he says, we should, we should go to, you know, if somebody has offended you or wronged you, go to that person and say, you know, this is, this really hurt me when you did this or when you said this.

And, and, and then they have an opportunity. It gives them an opportunity to say, I'm sorry. I really didn't mean that. I was, I was wrong. And Jesus says, if they do that, forgive them.

Now, sometimes we get confused about what forgiveness is. The word forgiveness is a word that means to release. It means to set someone free.

It's the same word for untying a knot or taking a chain off of someone, letting them, setting them, releasing them.

right? So forgiveness means releasing someone into God's hands and not trying to punish them or hurt them or pay them back yourself.

[10 : 54] That's what forgiveness means. Forgiveness doesn't necessarily mean that you completely forget what happened. Although sometimes, in God's mercy, sometimes that can be a good thing, eventually.

Although sometimes, it's, sometimes we need to remember what happened. forgiveness isn't denying that something wrong happened. It's not making excuses. Right?

Again, Jesus says, go and if someone, if someone really wrongs you, go and rebuke them. Right? Now, of course, there, there is a time to overlook. Right?

Sometimes people say something minor and you know they weren't thinking and sometimes, sometimes it's best you just overlook it and you forgive and you go on and it's not a big deal. It's a little thing. But Jesus is saying if it's a bigger thing, you know, if there's a real sin, a real wrong, then deal with it but be willing to forgive.

And Jesus even says if they sin against you seven times in a day, I mean, have you ever had somebody sin against you seven times in the same day? If you have kids, maybe, right?

[11 : 56] Like, I mean, kids can do that. Right? But the other thing about kids is they can, they can, they can say they're sorry and actually mean it. Even if they, you know, kids go back and forth real quick.

Anyway, but Jesus says you must forgive. Jesus is saying as my followers, you don't have an option to decide, well, maybe I'll forgive them or maybe I won't.

Jesus says you must forgive. Forgiveness is hard, right? It's not easy but Jesus is saying you must forgive. And then verse 5, the apostles respond.

You see what the apostles say when they hear this? They say, increase our faith. Help us. Boy, that takes a lot of faith to, a lot of trust in God to be able to do that.

And Jesus says, even if you have just a little bit of faith, just a little bit of trust in God, God can make powerful things happen.

[13 : 03] You don't have to have a whole big handful of faith. You can even have a tiny mustard seed. And if you have just a little faith in Jesus and if you act on that faith, God says, Jesus says, amazing things can happen.

We'll actually see later in our passage some amazing things happening through when someone has faith. but we'll get there later.

So, so then, so 7 through 10, right, so Jesus has these high standards, right? Don't cause someone else to sin. Rebuke, forgive, whenever someone repents, even if it's seven times on the same day.

And the apostles say, please help us increase our faith. And Jesus says, even if you've got a little faith, you can do it. Or God can do great things through you. 7 through 10, Jesus sort of gives a parable or a little image, a story that would have made a lot of sense to people back then because Jesus was talking about a master and a servant.

And let me just explain a little bit of what that might have looked like. So, in Jesus' time, there were a lot of different kinds of servants who did a lot of different kinds of jobs.

[14 : 24] Cooking, gardening, cleaning, teaching, working in the field, managing finances, all kinds of things. But the word that's translated servant in this passage isn't just any kind of hired worker.

It's a word that means a bond servant. That means someone who belonged to someone else. And someone who is completely dependent on their master to provide for all of their needs.

And so, for a bond servant, it wasn't like they just were sort of hired to do a couple jobs here and there. But they were at the service of their boss 24-7.

Right? And so, Jesus says, if you have a bond servant, you know, working in the field, plowing, keeping sheep, and he comes in after a hard day's work, his first priority is get the dinner for the master on the table.

Right? not feed himself. And so, the bond servant's priority was to please the master and not himself.

[15 : 37] And the servant's own needs came afterwards. So, and the point that Jesus is making in verse 10 is he says, the master is never in debt to the bond servant because the master, because the servant belongs to the master.

All right. Now, let me just stop for a minute and address a question that might have come up when we're talking about masters and bond servants. Right? Because we all know that slavery caused a whole lot of trouble in the ancient world and in the modern world and it still does today.

There's, there's still slavery in many parts of the world and, and there's, there's trafficking in, in all kinds of, all kinds of slaves today. That is very oppressive and damaging.

And so, let me just say the Bible, Jesus is, Jesus is using an image that would have made sense to people in that culture. He's not saying that's how things should be because it's, it's, it's interesting if you look at the Bible, Jesus says to his disciples, you're all bond servants of God.

And he also says you're all sons and daughters of God through, through Christ. And so, what he says to basically all of us is that in one sense, we're all slaves who belong to God and don't have, and, and, and nothing belongs to us.

[17 : 06] And in another sense, he says, we're completely free. We're completely free through Jesus. And so, what did I, if, if you understand those two things, it actually levels out the playing field because you realize when you look at somebody else, I'm called to serve you.

Even more, just like a bond servant would, we're supposed to serve their master, I'm supposed to serve you as my brother or sister in Christ. And, if you look at somebody else, even the lowest person on the totem pole in society, you think, they are, this person is, a son or daughter of God who is free and who is loved by God.

And if, and so, it actually, in the long term, it sort of levels things out, right? And it makes us realize, well, there actually maybe shouldn't be this sort of master bond servant thing because, Jesus is saying, it's actually more, more about our relationship with God.

So, let me just say that because that's a, that's a, that's a question, a concern that comes up when we, when we hear about servants and masters and, and what Jesus is saying there. But what, the point that Jesus is making is that we belong to Jesus if we're his disciples.

And that, that, what he's saying is God doesn't owe you something. And I think a lot of us sometimes think that God owes us something.

[18 : 45] And Jesus says, no, I mean, God created you out of nothing. He doesn't owe you. You owe him everything you have.

And Jesus says, don't think that you can sort of do some, do some good things and get extra credit with God that sort of balances out some of the bad things you've done.

Jesus says, no, no, no, you belong to God 24-7. You owe everything to God. God doesn't owe anything to you. And if you're one of Jesus' disciples, you have to know that.

That God must be number one priority above everything else. That God doesn't, God is not in your debt. Right?

Sometimes, sometimes we, sometimes we can fall into these traps. We can think that, well, if I obey God, then God's going to give me what I want. And Jesus says, maybe, and maybe not.

[19 : 52] And either way, you belong to God. And you're in his hands. And he made you. And you're his. And that means he doesn't owe you.

Right? But we can't make God owe us anything. So that's the, that's the first half of the passage what Jesus is emphasizing. And if you think about it, it's a pretty hard teaching, all these things.

Right? About don't cause others to sin and forgiveness and God doesn't owe you anything. And you might think, whoa, that's, that's hard. That's a hard teaching.

But in the second half of this passage, what we see is that Jesus is merciful. He's a merciful Lord. He's a merciful King.

And he comes to help us not because we deserve it, not because he owes us, but simply because he loves us and because we need him.

[20 : 58] So if you look at the second half of this passage, verse 11 to 19, Jesus is walking along the road and ten lepers call out to him from a distance. Now back then, if you had leprosy or some other type of skin disease, you had to stay separate from the rest of the society.

Partly for fear that you, you might be contagious. Some of these skin diseases were contagious and so they didn't want them to spread. And so you had to go around crying unclean, unclean.

You had to stay, keep your distance. Don't touch anyone, anyone else. Live by yourself with other lepers. And so, it was a very isolating experience.

You know, think about, think about it if you've, if you've ever had that kind of experience where you've been isolated from everyone else and you feel like nobody wants to touch you, to hug you, or shake your hand, or deal with you and in a loving way.

So that's what these lepers, that's what their life experience was, but they approached Jesus with humility and dependence. They approached Jesus not trying to say, Jesus, you owe me something, or Jesus, I did this for you, I want you to do this for me.

[22 : 20] They just, how do they say it? They say, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. have mercy. Help me. I need help.

And I think you can help me. Please, help me. That's what they're saying to Jesus. And Jesus says, go show yourselves to the priests. Now back then, the priests were not, the priests were not the hospital.

Okay, the priests did not administer medical treatments, but they were sort of like the doctors in that they would examine you. And they would either say, you've got leprosy and you're unclean, or they'd say, your disease has been cured and you're clean.

And they were the ones who had the right to say one way or the other, and what they said went. So Jesus says, go show yourselves to the priests.

Which is interesting, that's sort of a hopeful word. It's sort of like saying, go to the doctor, and it's sort of like the doctor has said, you have this disease.

[23 : 31] And Jesus says, no, go back to the doctor and have him check you out again. I mean, the only reason you go back is if you might actually be better. So it's a hopeful word Jesus gives them.

And so they leave and it says, as they went, they were cleansed. And nine of them, seems like, just go on their way. But one leper turns around and he doesn't go to the priest in the temple, but he comes back to Jesus and he makes a big scene.

Now, why does he come back to Jesus? Now, when I was a kid, my parents read me this story and they basically used it as a way to say, here's why you always need to say thank you to somebody who does something nice for you.

Right? Nine of them got something good and they went on their way and they were ungrateful and one of them was grateful. And you need to be grateful. Now, that's true, but that's actually not most of, that's missing a big part of what's going on here.

Because back then the rule was you have to go to the priest and the priest is the one who says you're clean and the priest lives in the temple and the temple is where God's presence is. And so you couldn't just decide not to do that.

[24 : 54] So why does the guy come back to Jesus? He comes back to Jesus because he sees that Jesus isn't just another man. He isn't just another person who did something nice for them.

They come back, this man comes back to Jesus and he falls at his feet. He worships Jesus. It says he gives praise to God and he kneels at the feet of Jesus. It's almost like he's saying, he's worshipping God as Jesus.

It's pretty surprising. You see, what he realized is that Jesus is the one who can make us clean and declare us clean.

The priest. And Jesus is the temple of God. The place where you can come and worship God. And he realizes the priest in the temple in Jerusalem, I found a better priest and a better temple.

And it's all right here in Jesus. And so he comes and he worships Jesus and he bows down before him and he thanks him. He says, thank you so much.

[26 : 13] You're the one who made me clean. And you can make me clean before God and before men forever. One person wrote, he wasn't just thankful for the gift of being healed.

He recognized the giver in the gift. he recognized that Jesus was the healer and Jesus was the priest and Jesus was the temple.

You see, the first half of this passage is about how Jesus is our Lord and our master and we belong to him. And he doesn't owe us anything, but the second half of this passage is about how Jesus did what he didn't have to do to heal us, to cleanse us, to forgive us.

You see, at the end, what Jesus says to this man, he says, rise and go your way. Your faith has made you well. And that word can also be translated, your faith has saved you.

This man doesn't just get healed, he gets saved. That means he gets forgiven of his sins and put right with God through Jesus. You see, Jesus showed mercy to the nine lepers who got healed and didn't even come back to say thank you.

[27 : 34] Jesus shows mercy even to the ungrateful and wicked. But Jesus showed an even greater mercy to this leper who came and found not just healing for his leprosy, but found him and found salvation and found cleansing.

And Jesus points out this man to his disciples and he says, do you see this man? And he points out he was a leper, right? The kind of person nobody else wanted to deal with and he was a Samaritan.

And the Samaritans were foreigners who followed some different religious traditions and the people of Israel didn't really like the Samaritans and there was all kinds of enmity between them.

And Jesus says, look at this man who most of you would just avoid or despise or want to run away from. And Jesus says, he had faith.

You just asked me increase our faith. You just said, give us more faith and I'm showing you what faith looks like. Faith looks like coming to Jesus and saying, Jesus, master, have mercy.

[28 : 43] I need you. Help me. You can. And faith looks like not just getting healed.

Right? You know, all kinds of people can get healed who don't actually come back and thank Jesus. People can get healed by Jesus and not be in a right relationship with God.

So it's not all about getting physically healed, even though Jesus can do that. It's about recognizing Jesus for who he is and saying, Jesus, you're the one who can make me clean. You're the one who has the presence of God dwelling in you and I can worship God at your feet.

That's why we can come before him tonight. You know, maybe you're like the Samaritan leper, right? He was an outcast. He was rejected by other people.

Maybe he had failed in his life. And Jesus comes to him and Jesus heals him. When he calls out for mercy, he listens and Jesus answers. And so if you can identify with the Samaritan, the leper man, Jesus says, come to me.

[30 : 05] If you call to me, I'll answer. Cry out for mercy and I'll draw near to you. That's what it means to have faith.

It's to know that Jesus can make us clean by his blood that he shed on the cross. So cry out to Jesus for mercy. Trust and obey what he says.

And God can even use you as an example to others. Right? That's also what Jesus wants to teach his disciples, is don't ignore people like the Samaritan leper. don't ignore people who you might avoid or fear or despise, people who have ugly kinds of illnesses.

Leprosy was an ugly illness. People who are foreigners, right, from all kinds of different walks of life. Jesus says, don't ignore those people. If you follow me, I love all kinds of people.

And I want you to learn to show mercy and learn to see and learn to have faith from people like this Samaritan leper. So Jesus says, don't ignore them.

[31 : 19] So that's what we see tonight, right? Priority and mercy, right? Jesus must be our number one priority. He's our Lord. And we owe him everything. And Jesus is our merciful Savior.

And we can count on him and we can call out to him for mercy and he'll hear us. So let's pray that those truths would come home to our hearts tonight.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for who you are. Lord, tonight we just want to acknowledge you as the Lord over everything, as the holy God, as our rightful master.

Lord, you created us, you made us. We wouldn't exist without you. You sustain us every day. You give us everything we have. Lord, we owe everything to you.

You don't owe anything to us, but we thank you that you are a merciful Savior. And Lord, we pray that we would draw near to you because you are a merciful Savior. Lord, you are not just someone who demands our everything, but you are someone who has given everything for us.

[32 : 29] So Lord, give us boldness and confidence to come before your throne because you are our great high priest. God, we come to you. We worship at your feet and give praise to God Almighty.

Lord, we pray that you would teach us these things so that we can be your disciples, so that we can live with you as our number one priority and so that we can rest confidently in your mercy and extend that mercy to others.

In your name we pray. Amen.