

MESSAGE FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2025

Scripture: Luke 17:5-10

Title: Missing the Point

Announcements

Pastor Appreciation Month, Church Conference, Angel's Attic needs bake goods. October is World Communion Sunday, Bible Study, Giving options.

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call To Worship

L: The Holy Spirit rekindles God's purpose and grace for our lives.

P: Grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

L: Christ Jesus, our savior, abolished death and brought life and immortality to light.

P: This is good news, not just for ourselves, but for the world.

L: Let us worship in thanksgiving and praise.

Unison Prayer

Holy and Triune God, your Table transcends time and space. As your disciples on World Communion Sunday, we join our voices to the songs and prayers offered to your name throughout the world.

Increase our faith and give us grace to love and forgive one another, as you have loved and forgiven us. We remember all your beloved children who suffer this day – especially the victims and refugees of war. We hear the echo of their broken lives in the songs of lament in today's scriptures. Help us bear witness to their suffering without fear. Give us the courage to live in you and for you. For the sake of all your beloved children, we pray. Amen

Offering lead in

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Song

Scripture: Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replied, "If you had faith the faith of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. Who among you would say to your slave who just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table?' 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? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you were ordered to do, say 'We are worthless slaves: we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

Meditation: Missing the point

Our passage today comes under the heading of "extra sayings of Jesus. What I mean by this is that they are sayings that they do not rely on their immediate context to help you understand them. They are stories that

we can probably get the idea of just by reading them. Now that does not mean they have not been misinterpreted or that they cannot benefit from knowing their context, just that I think, especially for the first one, we feel confident in how we might understand this text.

This passage breaks down into two distinct areas/stories. The first is the having faith of a mustard seed and the second is being a slave. For today let us walk through these passages because they have been abused by the church in the past and have been used as weapons against people of faith. The story of the mustard seed,

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" ⁶ The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a^[a] mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

I've heard many good sermons on this passage; it is one where I even remember some of the sermon points that I have heard. However, separate from how I have heard it preached on, it has been abused by a segment of American Christianity called the prosperity gospel.

The prosperity gospel has twisted this passage to imply that the greater gift you give the church or the pastor the greater your return. Think about it, it fits in in a twisted way. If you only have ten dollars and you trust

it to the church as an act of faith, than it will multiply. Because little things like the mustard seed can do great big things! There are several problems with this interpretation. First is that it is only swindlers who will tell you that if you give money God will give money back, and I will not back down from that statement. Secondly, it misses the point of faith in this story, which we will come back to in a moment.

A positive thing about this story that I can remember is from a sermon I heard years ago. In this sermon the preacher reminded the congregation of the nuclear bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima Japan. This bomb created mass destruction and loss of human life but in the end it did not move the mountain. Jesus says that if we have just a small amount of faith we will be able to move that mountain which the atomic bomb could not. This example has stuck with me for probably over 20 years at this point but there is a problem with this example as well. You see the issue in this passage is not to remind us to have more faith, the issue is that you only need a little bit of faith in order to live the Christian life.

You see this is where a reminder of the context of the story is helpful. The disciples have learned from Jesus that this path of discipleship is difficult and long. Instead of running from this for once the disciples asked for help. They did the right thing, and they asked Jesus to increase their

faith. The two interpretations I shared miss this. You see this passage is not Jesus yelling at the disciples to have more faith. Instead, it is Jesus trying to encourage them that only a little faith is needed on this journey.

This continues into the second story:

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’? 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’? ⁹ Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?

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!’”

Now I am going to ignore some context here. I am not inviting a long conversation about 1st century slavery. Quite frankly that is how this passage has been mistreated by the church. It has been used to justify slavery in the United States without consideration for what the point of the story is. A very prominent theologian suggested another way of seeing this passage and that is to see it as an employer vs employee.

So, hear me out on this. The point of this second story is that you would not expect the person who works for you to get praise or credit for doing what they are supposed to do. You are just expected to do your job. Jesus is using that as a metaphor for our faith. You do not get praise for doing what you are supposed to do as a faithful Christian, you are just supposed to do it! Again, this is not Jesus yelling at the disciples. Think of this as encouraging you to do the right thing because you know it is the right thing. This is much the same as the idea that how you live your faith without recognition is what you really value.

I do not know about you but sometimes I wish I was a better Christian. I wish I had more faith. Jesus reminds us today that faith, no matter how little is a big deal and that in order to be a follower of Christ we should do the things we know to be right even if we do not get recognition.

You are not invisible to Christ. Christ sees your acts of faith, such as, getting out of bed is an act of faith. Christ sees the work you do to help people when others do not notice. These passages remind us of God's love and grace, it is not about what you get wrong. Instead, it is about striving to grow. Amen.

Communion

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them up to the Lord.

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: It is right to give thanks to and praise.

L: O God, you created the universe with a shout of joy, a word of delight, and a big bang. You made gravity, black holes and antimatter., swirling electrons and dancing quarks, shooting stars and sapphire blue planets. You filled the ocean with clown fish and sharks, with dolphins and killer whales. You filled the air with doves and hawks, songbirds and hummingbirds. You covered the land with shimmering aspen and weathered pine. And You blessed all the creatures of the earth: The bugs, the snakes, lizards, the lions, tigers, and bears, the puppies and the hippos, the zebras and penguins. And You blessed all the children of the earth every shape color and complexion, every makeup and mood, every style

and substance. But we, O God, preferred to go our own way. We messed things up. We wanted to be in charge. We wanted to be in control. We thought everything belonged to us. We polluted the environment. We destroyed each other. We turned playgrounds into battlefields, School yards into minefields, hospitals into death camps, and children into killers. But, God, You never gave up on us. You never walked away or walked out. You honored Your promises even when we broke ours. You always welcomed us home with open arms and a warm heart even when our fists were clenched and our minds still closed. When we walk through sorrow and chaos, You are with us. When we live through moments of war and acts of terror., You walk with us. When our homes are destroyed, You help us to build new homes and finally lead us home to You. And so, with Your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise Your name and join their unending hymn:

P: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

L: In the right time, in the fullness of Your time, in the nick of time, You sent Your Son to bring us back to life. He opened a window into Your new creation. He showed us a vision of Your way: where every child has enough

to eat, and can sleep safely all through the night, where every graveyard is a front porch of heaven, where the untouchable and unlovable are given the seats of honor, where tears of mourning become tears of laughter, where grievous wrongs and horrid suffering are made right and fair, where children hunt Easter eggs on playgrounds made from battlefields, and where everyone is welcomed and loved. In the dead ends of our lives Jesus clears a way ahead, In the dead spots of our relationships, Jesus speaks words of hope and renewal. In the dead zones of our cities, Jesus calls forth a new kingdom. When we are dead tired, Jesus picks us up and carries us to a place of rest. When we are dead wrong, Jesus confronts us with the truth. When we are dead last, Jesus tells the he has won us for eternal life. And so on the night in which he gave himself up for us.....Jesus took bread, gave thanks to You, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said: "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to You, gave it to his disciples, and said:" Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me." And so, in remembrance of these Your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we

offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with

Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

P: Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

Pour out you Holy Spirit on us gathered, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by His blood. Renew our communion with all Your saints, especially those who now live with You. Since You have refreshed our souls from the waters of life, help us refresh and renew others. Since you have given us strength for the journey, help us to strengthen others on their journey.

(Congregational response)

Send your Spirit to renew our faith and transform our souls so that we may hear your music, work for justice, delight in heavenly food, and strengthen one another in love and grace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Benediction

*Invite people to stay to enjoy Mike's playing since
he will be gone from us for a while*