

week 17: *Jesus expects humility*

Scripture to Read: Luke 17:1-10

1 And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! 2 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. 3 Pay attention to yourselves!
“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”
5 The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”
6 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.
7 “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’? 8 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’? 9 Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? 10 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.’”

Summary of the Text

Luke strings together various short sayings of Jesus to his disciples—all of which point toward the humility which true servants of Christ must learn.

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation

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.’”
—Luke 17:10

Questions for Personal Study and/or Group Discussion

- How would you define *humility*? Think of people who fit this description.

- C.S. Lewis argued, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.” Do you agree? Why?
- To whom is Jesus referring as “these little ones” in v.2? What does Jesus mean if by “these little ones” he is referring to the outcasts he welcomes into his kingdom? What if he is referring to children? What if he is referring to all those who trust in him? In what ways might we cause “little ones” to sin?
- Why don’t we forgive? Why isn’t forgiveness practiced more in Christian churches, families and relationships? Read Matthew 18:21-35. What truths about forgiveness emerge from the Matthew passage?
- How is forgiveness both an *event* and a *process*? What should you do if you find it hard to forgive?
- Mark 11:25 suggests that we are to forgive someone no matter what, while Luke 17:3 suggests that you forgive someone only if he repents. Which is right? In what sense might they both be right? [Hint: Think about the difference between *forgiveness* and *reconciliation*.]
- What is Jesus teaching us about faith in v.5-6? How does this connect to the theme of humility?
- V.7-10 remind us that all the hard work we do never puts God in debt to us. In what ways do we forget this?

Thoughts worth thinking

C.S. Lewis on humility: “Don’t imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call ‘humble’ nowadays: he won’t be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who’s always telling you that, of course, he’s nobody. Probably all you’ll think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him, it will be because you feel a bit envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He won’t be thinking about himself at all. There I must stop. If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step is to realize that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least, nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you’re not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed.”

Millstone: A millstone (v.2) was a round stone used for grinding grain (here probably weighing hundreds of pounds, propelled by a donkey walking in circles on a track).



Check your forgiveness score? In Judaism it was considered honorable to forgive three times; the disciples, as part of the new covenant community formed in and by Jesus, are to exceed that standard.

Tips for Parents with Young Children

Monday: Read Luke 17:1-10. Have your children draw a picture of one of the scenes from this story. Let your child explain what is going on in the picture.

Tuesday: Talk about forgiveness. Help your child think of situations where he/she needed to forgive someone. Also remember times when your child stood in need of forgiveness. Because Jesus is the Son of God, he *can* forgive our sins. If we tell him we are sorry and ask him to forgive us, he will.

Wednesday: Review what your children learned in Wednesday Night Connection. Spend some time together praying for FPC, its leaders, and your friends at church.

Thursday: Talk with your children about faith [see Luke 17:5-6]. Use an object lesson, such as a small seed you might find in your spice rack or a sunflower seed. What makes faith so powerful? It is God (the object of faith) rather than our faith. Faith is like a window through which you can see something. What matters is not the size of the window; what matters is the God that your faith is looking out on. If you trust the Father, who sent Jesus and the Spirit, then the smallest peephole of faith unleashes great power. Be sure to pray that God would do big things for his glory in your life and in the lives of others.

Friday: Ask your children what they would like to do (e.g. read a story, pray, sing worship songs, go for a nature walk to enjoy God's creation, etc.), and then do that with them. Talk about what it means to be humble and about how Jesus was humble while he was on earth.

Saturday: Read a Bible story to your children, or have them read a story to you if they are old enough. Pray that Phillip would have boldness in preaching the Word of God tomorrow. Also, pray for the Sunday School teachers and for the musicians and choir members who serve us each Sunday. The **sacrament of the Lord's Supper** will be celebrated in Morning Worship. It would be good to review catechism questions about the Lord's Supper.

Sunday: Before you leave for church, explain to your children that their ministry at church is to welcome new children, help their Sunday School teacher, serve others, and worship God in the service. After church, discuss with your children what they learned and what you learned.