

Conley Memorial Presbyterian Church, 20th Sunday After Pentecost, October 2, 2016

Faith and Duty
Dr. Kenneth Humphreys
October 2, 2016

Luke 17:5-10

I have been a Scout leader for all of my adult life and have recited the Boy Scout Oath literally thousands of times. It is a promise made by Scouts to do all they can for their faith, other people and themselves, in that order of priority.

It begins, *“On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God.”* That is what our scripture reading this morning from Luke 17 is all about --- doing your duty to God and developing the necessary faith to do just that.

But what are faith and duty and exactly how do we do our duty to God?

David E. Lilienthal once said, *“Faith is greater than any bomb! Faith is the most potent weapon ever devised. Do not lose faith in mankind, and in the purposes of the creator. Do not lose faith in the future. Much is being done to promote brotherhood, understanding and peace.”*

This quote appears on a wall of the Chapel of Peace in the International Peace Garden on the US-Canadian border between Dunseith, North Dakota and Boissevain, Manitoba, Canada.

“Faith is greater than any bomb!”

How much faith do we need?

How to increase their faith was what the apostles were asking Jesus in our scripture reading. They said to Jesus, *“Increase our faith!”* But that was not necessary.

He replied that even the tiniest amount of faith can accomplish miracles equating it to a mustard seed, the tiniest seed referenced anywhere in scripture --- a virtually insignificant seed.

This tiny amount of faith, in the parable, is enough to uproot a mulberry tree and replant it in the sea. But is that a big deal?

Yes indeed. It surely is because the mulberry tree has a vast root system that holds tenaciously to the ground, so much so that even a hurricane is unlikely to dislodge

it. And, of course, if transplanted in the sea it couldn't survive in the salt water.

What Jesus is saying is that even with the tiniest amount of faith miracles can happen, and they will and do every day.

Jesus then talks about a slave or servant, depending upon which Bible translation you read. The servant has jobs to do and he does his duty. Then the master gives the servant even more to do and does not reward him for accomplishing his tasks.

Should the servant expect a reward or a thank you? Not necessarily. He was just doing his duty. Just as a Scout is expected to do his duty to God and not expect a reward, so should all of us do our best to do our duty to God. We are God's servants and should not expect any reward beyond that which Jesus has already provided to us --- eternal salvation.

The servant probably had a job description of sorts. He knew what he was expected to do and also knew that additional duties were likely to be given to him from time to time.

We have a job description from Jesus. That is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves. That is our duty to God and one which we must never overlook.

The thrust of the scripture reading is that the servant's time and labor belong to the master. Similarly our time and labor belong to God.

Fred Craddock, et al ⁽¹⁾ said, *"Disciples of Jesus live by faith, even if it be as small as a mustard seed, but the life of trust is new each day. Like the manna in the wilderness, there is no surplus for tomorrow, no time in which there is more than enough for today. Disciples of Jesus live in obedience, but that, too, is new each day. One does not say, 'Now that I have completed all the duties of love, it is my turn to be served.' Such calculations are foreign to life in the kingdom of God."*

"The life of faith Jesus points out is like planting seeds, waiting for God to use the efforts of God's people." ⁽²⁾

Let us remember that as we gather around the Lord's Table this morning along with all Christians worldwide.

"On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God ... and to help other people at all times."

Amen.

(1) Fred B. Craddock, et al, "*Preaching Through the Christian Year, Year C*", Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, PA, 1994.

(2) These Days, October 6, 2013

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Luke 17:5-10

Liturgical color – green

**This is the day the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Announcements

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Destruction and violence are everywhere;
strife and contention are all around.

The needs of the world are so great;

O Lord, increase our faith.

The law is slack,
and justice does not prevail.

The needs of the world are so great;

O Lord, increase our faith.

How many threats surround us:
warfare, homelessness, loneliness, loss.

The needs of the world are so great,

but you, O God, are greater still—

the One in whom all things are possible.

O Lord, increase our faith in you!

Let us worship God!

*Opening Hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" #276

Opening Prayer

Faithful Lord,
present in sorrow,
present in hope,
allow our lament
with space to seek you,
that we may not forget
that your steadfast love never ceases
and your Spirit forever flows.

Amen.

Prayer Response Inside front cover of hymnal – In Unison

*Hear Our Prayer, O Lord, Hear Our Prayer, O Lord, Incline Thine ear to us, And grant us Thy peace. **Amen.***

Morning Psalm Psalm 137:1-8. Pew Bible page 973.

Please read the even numbered verses responsively

¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.

² **There on the poplars
we hung our harps,**

³ for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

⁴ **How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?**

⁵ If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.

⁶ **May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,**

**if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy.**

⁷ Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did
on the day Jerusalem fell.

“Tear it down,” they cried,
“tear it down to its foundations!”

⁸ **Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy is the one who repays you
according to what you have done to us.**

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Call to Confession

[spoken from the font]

God answers those who seek mercy;
salvation comes to those who wait for the Lord.
Therefore, let us confess
all we have done,
and what we have not done,
trusting in God’s grace.

Prayer of Confession (Unison)

**Merciful God, you have called us to live
in sincere faith
and to suffer for the gospel.**

**We confess that we do not come before you
with a clear conscience.**

**Our faith is clouded by sin and uncertainty.
We shrink from your call to live sacrificially
on behalf of others.**

**Too quickly, we seek our own ease and comfort first.
We confess that in our own lives, and in the church,
we rely on our power rather than yours.**

**Forgive us, we pray,
for we are fractured and fearful disciples.**

**Take away from us a spirit of cowardice,
and restore to us the spirit of power rightly used,
of love unconditionally offered,
and of self-discipline gracefully lived.**

**In new mercy, forgive us and increase our faith,
that we may be faithful servants at your table.**

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Assurance of God's Pardon

Hear the sound of love poured out:

[Water is poured into the font.]

The power of God,
has saved us:
grace is given to us
in Christ Jesus,
who abolished death
and brought life
and immortality to light.

*Gloria Patri #579– In Unison

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen

Children's' Message

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God, speak your word;
let those who hear
guard the good treasure entrusted to them
with the help of the Holy Spirit,
living in us all. **Amen.**

Gospel Reading Luke 17:5-10 --- Pew Bible pages 1628-1629

Listen to the Word of God from the Gospel according to Luke:

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

⁶ He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

⁷ "Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'?

⁸ Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? ⁹ Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

*Communion Hymn "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" #338

Sermon "Faith and Duty" Dr. Kenneth Humphreys

Anthem "Great is Thy Faithfulness", Most Loved Hymns (© 2004 Liberty Records. Used by Permission. CCLI License 11224027) (CD 3, Tr. 14)

*Affirmation of Faith *Nicene Creed*. (Unison)

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth,

of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, light from light,

true God from true God, begotten, not made,

of one Being with the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,

was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary

and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Tithes and Offerings

The Lord is our portion,
Therefore have hope
as you bring your gifts to God.

*Doxology #592 – In Unison

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Please respond to the words “God our Savior” with “**Hear our prayer.**”

Trusting in the power of God to deliver us,
let us make our prayers of intercession for all,
saying: God our Savior, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the church . . .

Teach us to trust in your saving power,
to rely on the gifts of your Holy Spirit,
and to be bold in our testimony to the Lord.

God our Savior, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the world . . .

Give us leaders who are committed
to doing what is just and right,
so that all may live in peace and safety.

God our Savior, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for this community . . .

Restore our abandoned cities,
rebuild our ruined neighborhoods,
and renew our broken relationships.

God our Savior, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for loved ones . . .

Comfort those who are suffering
or wasting away in their sorrow.
Sustain them with your steadfast love.

God our Savior, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful and mighty God, as you are one,
make us one with you through Jesus Christ,
whom you have sent to redeem us,
and in whose holy name we pray. **Amen.**

The Lord's Supper

Invitation

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving (Responsive – See Bulletin insert)

The Lord's Prayer

Words of Institution

Communion of the People

Prayer After Communion

*Closing Hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" #376

*Charge and Blessing

Go forth, relying on the power of God,
who saved us and called us to a holy calling,
not according to our works,
but to God's purpose and grace.

May God restore the road before you
that leads to grace, mercy, and peace;
may Christ fill you with the treasure
of faith and love;
and may the Holy Spirit help you
to live in hope, now and forever.