

The Humility And Intimacy Of Faith

by Sandeep Poonen

This sermon delves into Luke 17:3-10, focusing on the themes of forgiveness, faith, humility, and intimacy with God. It emphasizes the endless nature of forgiveness, the misconception about needing more faith, the importance of humility in obedience, and the heart of service towards God. The message highlights the need to reset our attitudes, recognize our unworthiness, and find joy in serving the Lord.

Scripture: Luke 17:3, Luke 17:5, Luke 17:7, Romans 6:16, Job 33:12, Revelation 22:3, Psalm 24:1, John 4:23, Colossians 3:23

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Humility in Service"

Description

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Transcript

I want to speak from, I would like to speak from Luke chapter 17. If you'd like to turn there, I'll be reading the first few verses from Luke chapter 17 verses 3 to 10. Luke chapter 17, if you have your Bibles, Luke chapter 17 from 3 to 10.

Jesus is speaking here and He says, Be on your guard, if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day and returns to you seven times, saying, I repent, forgive him. The apostle said to the Lord, increase our faith.

And the Lord said, if you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you. Which of you having a slave plowing or tending sheep will say to him when he has come in from the field? Come immediately and sit down and eat. But will he not say to him, prepare something for me to eat and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink? And afterwards you may eat and drink.

He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, we are unworthy slaves. We have done only that which we ought to have done. It's a tremendous passage.

And so I just wanted to share some of the things that I have learned from this passage about faith. First of all, it starts in the context of forgiveness. And what Jesus is saying here is if a brother sins against us, we must rebuke him.

And if he repents, we must forgive him. But what's interesting is he says if he sins against us seven times a day and they repent, I must still forgive him. It's interesting also that Jesus doesn't say if the man, it's interesting that Jesus says if the man repents.

So this is clearly Jesus is not saying if somebody just comes and says, I'm sorry, because that's how we tend to do it. Especially among children. I'm sorry, guys, moving on.

Even if I've hurt you. That's not one of the things that that's not what Jesus is talking about here, because I can see. Well, do you really mean it? No, Jesus is saying if the brother repents, this is a person really repenting of the sin.

But if he repents, he sins seven times a day and repents seven times a day. In one day, I should forgive him. And I don't know if you've imagined this ever happening.

This probably is tested a lot among the children, among siblings to play playing and fighting with their children. I'm sure this happens a lot where the same sin occurs over and over again. And I think according to the innocence of the children or relative understanding of the children, they repent the best they can.

But for me, as an adult, I was thinking about it with my wife, husband and wife. Imagine if I got angry and shouted at my wife once in a day. And I told her, I'm truly sorry, I repent of what I did, I shouldn't have spoken like that.

I'm sure that my wife will forgive me. But if I did the same thing three or four times in one day, what would I do? I wouldn't be shocked if my wife tells me, you know, excuse me, I'm not sure what I want to say, because I don't know if you're truly sorry. You're saying you're repenting, but it's the third time and the fourth time in the same day.

And you're repenting. And same way, if I have my wife give me a dirty look once a day, I'm like, wait, what was that? I'm sorry, I shouldn't have given you that dirty look. One time, two times in a day.

After the third or the fourth time, it's not even been 24 hours. I don't know if I can forgive you. Jesus was making a very clear point.

You have to endlessly forgive. It wasn't seven as a cut off number. It was a point of endlessly forgiving.

And what I what I'm trying to drive from this is what the how the disciples responded to it. The disciples understood what Jesus was saying. The disciples probably looked at each other and saw their different personalities and said, this is we can't do this.

This is simply impossible for us to do. Peter can't forgive James. James can't forgive Matthew.

Matthew can't forgive Judas. All kinds of squabbling is going on. I can't do this.

We can't do this. And the disciples respond by saying, this is literally impossible for us to do. The only thing I can think of is, Lord, you need to increase our faith so that we can have confidence that we have any chance of doing this.

And this can apply to our lives, too, when we look at some of the commands of God. That was the example here. But it could be other commands as well.

When lust seems impossible to beat. We can look at it. I know I did when I was in my younger years and said, God, this is impossible.

I simply can't win and keep getting victory in this area. Or it could be getting angry. It can be a loose tongue, giving up history.

We can look at it and say, Lord, this is impossible. And we come to God and we say, God, increase our faith. And like the disciples did.

And we think we're asking God a good request by saying, Lord, increase our faith. But I was instructed by how Jesus responded to see how God course corrects us. Because when I read Jesus' answer, I see that Jesus is course correcting the disciples and saying, hold on, hold on.

Let's not give ourselves too much credit here. Because then he says, if you had fit the size of a mustard seed, you'd be able to tell the mulberry tree, go be uprooted and planted in the sea. I looked it up.

A mustard seed is about one millimeter big. That's it. The mustard seed gets to be about 20 meters in height.

20 meters versus one millimeter. That's about 20,000 times the size of the problem. If you had a faith this small and you had a problem that was 20,000 big, size bigger, you'd still be able to solve the problem.

The problems that are so insurmountable, lust or anger or bitterness or unforgiveness, loose tongues, gossiping, which seems insurmountable. We go to God and saying, increase our faith. Because, God, I've got this much faith.

All I need to do is increase my faith. Jesus calls a time out. Jesus says, hold up.

You've got the wrong view. You just need a mustard seed size of faith. And you'll be able to solve the problem.

A problem that's 20,000 times bigger than the size of your faith. So it's not a problem about increasing your faith. That's what I got from this.

And whenever I come to God and say, God, increase my faith. God says, you don't need to increase your faith. The problem is not the size of your faith.

Increase our faith. That's not the right question to ask. And then he goes on to tell me the story, which is the story about the slave who comes in and after doing all that God has commanded, what should he do? Should he come in and want to sit down and eat? And Jesus says, no.

The slave will have to prepare a meal for the master after working in the field, plowing the field and tending the sheep. And what I got from that was God is asking me a question. In the trials that seem insurmountable.

That's my point. God is asking me a question through the story. God was asking me a question in the issues and the challenges of life that seem insurmountable.

And I've really been benefited by hearing the right question that the Lord is asking me at different times. As we've heard in the church many times, what is the question God asks us when we return to him in genuine repentance? And for many years, I used to think that the question God asks me is, why did you do that? For many years, I thought that the first question that God asked Adam and Eve after they sinned was, why did you do that? Why did you eat of the fruit? But that wasn't the first question God asked Adam and Eve after they ate of the fruit and they sinned. The first question God asked Adam and Eve was, where are you? I want a relationship with you.

Not why did you do it, but where are you? Why are you not with me? And so similarly, what transformed my Christian life was when I saw that the first question God asked me when I returned to him in genuine repentance is, Sandeep, did you see my face when you came home? Not, have I seen your face? I know your face is crying and tears and repentance. No, Sandeep, did you see my face when you came home? If you did, and if you knew who I was, you would see it's a face of total acceptance. When you return to me in genuine repentance, it's a face of total acceptance.

Infinite joy and relief that you're home. Genuine happiness. Those are the emotions that are in my face, in my face.

And you're so busy looking at your face and your misery and the challenges and the mistakes you've made. You've not had taken the time to look at my face when you came home in genuine repentance. And it extended from that because the father asked me, did you see my face every single time you returned home to me? Did you see that it is the same face of acceptance and infinite joy and relief and happiness every time you come home in repentance? And that transformed the God that I saw.

But then here in this situation, this is a different situation. This is God asks me if I'm diligent to do all that I've commanded. This is similar to the elder brother in the story because that's what the elder brother said when he came home after plowing the field.

He said, look, I never disobeyed the command of yours. It's a different question Jesus asks. And this is the question that he asks with all due respect.

This is what Jesus asks. Who do you think you are, Sandeep? This is the question that God asks if we are diligent to do all that we are commanded. Now, look, if we're sloppy and we're defeated in sin, that's not what God is asking me.

God asks me to be a slave of righteousness. God asks me to obey his commands because we claim to love him. It's very clear.

Romans 6 is very clear to me about this. Present the members of your body as slaves of righteousness. Come under grace and seek to become a slave of righteousness.

If you love me, keep my commandments. So when I'm sloppy and defeated, God tells me to become a slave of righteousness. But then, as I become a slave of righteousness, God asks me, then I started to do all that God has commanded, as far as I can tell.

Then there's a different question that God asks me. Who do you think you are? This was the question that God asked Job. Job was a blameless man.

Job was a very righteous man. If you read Job 31, you see how righteous Job was. He probably beats all of our righteousness.

But when Job and God started having a conversation, God said, Job, I know the depths of your immense righteousness. In fact, if you want to know, and he didn't tell him this, but if you want to know the truth, I've been boasting about you to the devil himself. That's how much I know about your righteousness.

But what we read in the passages of Job 33, 34, whenever God starts speaking to Job is this, Job, who do you think you are? And specifically, who do you think you are, especially when you think about me? And that's what God was telling me through this passage in Luke 17 too. When I find challenges that are insurmountable, when I find commands of God, obey and forgive and forgive, beyond any reasonable amount, when it is fighting lust, fighting anger, beyond what seems humanly possible. Yes, we need to come to God.

But the secret to it is coming to God with the right attitude. And God asks a very searching question to me, and that's what I get from that parable of the story of that slave, saying, after you did all you commanded, who do you think you are? And none of us are pretending to do all that God has commanded. I think all of us will be quick to admit that.

But we can have that attitude secretly in our heart, as we're thinking, Lord, I've done so much for you. Lord, I sought to obey your word in every area. I sought to obey your voice as best as I heard it.

And then I come to God and say, God, I have a subtle, slight desire that says, God, I deserve this. And God, I think Job had that too. And that's when the question of God says, who do you think you are? And it's a very searching question, it's a settling question, because it resets the button in our Christian life to say, Sandeep, who do you think you are? You deserve nothing.

You're an unworthy slave, as it says. I've only done what is commanded. So now that you're with me, put your servant's robe on and serve me.

Here's what kills my faith. What kills even a mustard seed of faith. God's saying, you don't need a lot of faith.

All you need is a mustard seed. That's such a small, one millimeter. That's how much faith you need.

But you know what kills it? Whenever you seek your own glory. And somehow, even subtly, when I'm seeking my own glory, God says, that's a faith killer. And as you search yourself, you have some glory associated with yourself when you come to me and say, Lord, I've done all that you've commanded.

And Job had some kind of self-glory as he came to God and he talked to Job's friends. Something of, have you seen what I've done? And when we come to God after we've done all that he's commanded and say, Lord, have you seen what I've done? We're like the younger brother talking to the father. Have you seen all that I've done? Even in wanting something like having God-fearing children.

There can be layers of self-glory in there. I mean, I shouldn't say there can be. It's probably more right to say there are layers of self-glory in there.

When I come to God and say, God, I want my children to all be disciples of you. Because our flesh is so deceitful, because we are so addicted to self and our flesh hates God. Lord, there is it in there.

I must look for it. I must be proactive to root it out. And that's the endless humility that must accompany faith.

That I must say, Lord, as I'm starting to obey more of your commands, as I'm starting to be more faithful in my private life, and I see some of these commands of God that still seem insurmountable, and I come to God with expectations and prayers, maybe very good prayers for my children, for my loved ones, for those who are lost. God says, hold on, hold on. You can have a mustard seed faith and you'll move mulberry trees.

20,000 times its size. That's how little faith you have. But first of all, let's reset.

Who do you think you are? And it's not an insulting question, but it's a resetting question to say, God, God's asking me something. Have we got the right attitude here after you've done all that I've commanded? But there's also another part to this story which I also wanted to end with. There's an intimacy in this faith.

We don't need a lot of faith, and there's a humility in this faith that is described in the story. But there's an intimacy in this faith. What is the highlight of my day? What was the highlight of the day of the slave? If the slave had the right attitude and didn't look at doing all the things that he commanded, that the master commanded, the highlight of the day was serving the master.

So after plowing the field, after tending to the sheep, all of that was done because the slave was looking forward to serving the master, not being fed, not eating the food at the end of the day, the grand feast. That was when you came home. That was when you repented.

That was when the fatted calf was killed for you. But now you're not in need of repentance on a daily basis. You're doing all that God has commanded.

Then the fatted calf is for the Lord. Then all of our service is for the Lord. And that the Lord was asking me and telling me, look, that can be the highlight of your day.

That should be the highlight of your day is serving me. What do you think you're going to be doing in heaven? It says in Revelation, I think 21 or 22, that they shall serve him forever. A lot of parts there, but they shall serve him.

And that is a heart of service that we have. And that is the heart. It's not an attitude of service.

It's a heart of service. It's a heart that says there's nothing better that I'd be doing than to serve you. And so, yeah, the whole day that I was obeying all the commandments was just the precursor to the real icing on the cake.

The real benefit for me is right now here. And of course not. It's not about me eating and enjoying myself.

No, the privilege and the pleasure is me serving you. And I saw the Lord inviting me to that intimacy of being able to serve Jesus Christ, the creator of the universe, the God of the universe, who created the whole heavens and the earth. Can you imagine going and giving a plate and saying, God, this is for you? And God saying, that's delicious.

You know, heaven is my footstool. Heaven and earth are my footstool. But I'm hungry.

I'm hungry for those who tremble at my word. I'm hungry for those who are humble. And I'm hungry for intimacy.

God created us in his own image because he wanted to look at us and see his reflection. Right. He created us in his image so that we could see a reflection of himself, too.

And we look at him and we see a reflection of him. And we want to see a reflection of God. And God has wants to be fed in the most holy, reverential way.

God says, I reserve that privilege to you. It's not a burden. But if you're caught up with all the things that you're doing during the day, whether it's paying your bills and working hard and this and that, you'll miss the most important part of what I reserve for you.

There's a chance for you to put on your waiter's clothes and serve me. And dear brothers and sisters, I'm gripped when the commands of God seem too difficult to bear or seem insurmountable. Let's hear God asking us the right question.

After we've done all that we've commanded, after we fill the water pots with water, let us go to Jesus and say, God, it's still water. You can turn water into wine. You can take what I've done and really make it something that pleases you.

It can become the best wine if you will touch it just a little bit. One drop, one millimeter of your touch can change all that I've done into something tasty for you. If not, it's worthless.

And Lord, change my heart so that I can see the heart of service that longs for that to serve you. That's a preparation, Lord, for heaven, and I want to start that now. May God help us.

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