**10/2/22**

**Humble Servants**

**Luke 17:5-10**

“Heavenly Father, thank you for genuine faith, which

can accomplish what experience, reason, and probability would disallow. Amen.” (2)

Last Sunday Chip talked about the rich man eating sumptuously in his purple fine linen. This very man was clueless to how he feasted daily, and how others struggled. He lived his best life here on earth, and he avoided the man lying at his gates looking for just the scraps from his table. The dogs licked the poor man’s sores to even torment him, instead of soothe him. We got to see the ultimate in role reversals though. We learned yet again that we can’t take with us what status or possessions we gain here on earth. This rich man ended up being in Hades, and he was so pompous to feel he could still demand and control things. He thought he could command someone to go across the great chasm to help him, or even demand someone to rise from the dead to forewarn others not to follow the path he did. Chip even shared about his personal struggles, and how he strayed off the path in a very different way than this rich man. He drew this back together though by relating the rich man and his lack of insight into the fact that neither were really living as children of God.

This week’s Gospel Lesson has some relational context to last week’s too. However, I must admit I really struggled with coming up with something to share with you. I must say it was not due to lack of effort or research. I really think it was more so on the lines that it was one of the more common stories. It was due to the fact that I really over evaluated things, and kept spinning my wheels to get something out that was really so simple.

This week we have the opportunity to explore the call of being humble servants. However, all too often being humble is not what many of us are used to. Wouldn’t you say we are more used to winning a prize, or being on top? Wouldn’t you say we all have some competitive spirit within us that always has us reaching for more, or trying to get some kind of eternal rewards or victory to ensure our place in the Kingdom? Well, Jesus was quick to remind His apostles, and even more so pretty quick to remind us that the victory here means very little. Yes, it is important to share the faith and share about the love He has for us, but it is about playing out our roles we were given.

Well, this might have swerved your thoughts and concepts of what you thought we would be talking about here though. You might be thinking to yourself that we were going to be talking about asking for more faith, mustard seeds, moving trees, and being slaves. Well, we are going to talk about that, but I will constantly try and refocus on the simplest of all facts, and that is that we are called to be humble servants.

For some reason, all too often than not, we need reminded that we have all that we need to accomplish what we were set out to do. All we have to do is have that continued faith that we were blessed with by our Father. We don’t need to ask for more like the apostles did. We simply need to realize that we need to move forward and do what is asked of us. We do not need to worry if we have done enough, or worry if we have enough to accomplish the goal. Of course we have enough! We all have that servant heart inside of us that is required to do what He has called us to do. We need to remind ourselves that each and every day we need to be humble with our role though, versus allowing our ego or doubt to creep in and get in the way. We need to be humble servants in His world, and more importantly we need to let our faith shine!

“The saying is not to be taken literally. Christians are to be neither conjurers nor magicians. Jesus wants his disciples to approach challenges with a can-do attitude- can-do, that is, with, the grace of, God…. One really does not possess such power. It must be given as a gift, and, therefore, asked for, accepted and used responsibly. Faith brings responsibility to be faithful. It is, after all, faith in a great God, not great faith in self. Genuine faith can accomplish what experience, reason, and probability would disallow.” (2)

Well, you might be sitting there asking yourselves what about that mustard seed and commanding that tree to move? Well, of course Jesus had to give us some crazy analogy so He could ensure people back then and now were paying attention to His teachings. I know I do my best to manage to lead by His example every day when I am out working with my individuals in the mental health community. I tell some crazy stories, and have some off the wall analogies at times too. However, I also remind my individuals that they have the keys to their health, and even more so, they have the keys to the Kingdom. Now, I know you may be going, hold on a minute here Vince. How can you incorporate your faith into work without upsetting anyone? Well, it is quite simple honestly. For without faith no individual can even come close to the concept that they can get better. They have no realization that they can avoid repeated mental health hospitalizations, avoid ending up in jail, or even more so avoid death before their time due to suicide. Now, I remind you that I work with some rough and very sick individuals, and if they are not reminded of who they are because of whose they are then I am missing my call. Through these empowerment principals, just like those set forth by Christ, I manage to remind my folks that they have what it takes. They only need to realize a mustard size amount of faith in themselves, and with the power from our great creator, they can move that proverbial mulberry tree in their lives.

Let me again remind you of this simple, but yet complex concept. “We are called as kingdom people to set an example, not for reward, not for praise, but because it is our duty, it is our response to God’s saving grace in our lives.” (4) Again, everyone is called to be humble servants to themselves, and more importantly to others. So, I chose to share that daily with my folks. Sometimes it may be a little more passive than bluntly or directly, but it always comes from the heart and it is backed by faith.

Now, now, I did not forget about the servants or slaves in our Gospel Lesson today. So, let’s go back to connecting the proverbial dots here. This is where we are reminded that “His hearers would have easily grasped the down-to-earth example Jesus uses. They knew about slaves working outside all day long and coming in at night only to have to get supper ready for their master, a master who had been rather idle all day while they slaved. While the slaves would do it, they would resent it, the injustice of it all. Jesus is telling them, and of course us, that sometimes we may resent, in our lower brain, what God commands and expects of us and think we do not have the power to do it, yet that mustard seed-sized faith is more than enough to accomplish it. It is not a pill. It is not a commodity. It is a free will choice to switch perspectives and breathe the air of God, his Spirit. Then, we are grateful to God for providing that air, rather than expecting him to be grateful to us for absorbing it. A matter of perspective, faith.” (2) Now, why don’t we let all that settle in for a moment?

 As we close things off here with one another today we are forever reminded that “Serving Christ Jesus is never over. Put another way, “It isn’t over until they are shoveling dirt on your face.” You are never too old, too tired, or too anything to stop doing your duty to God. God wants your time, talent, tithe, attendance, etc. The master expects the servants to perform their duties daily! As slavery is a way of life; so also, faith is a way of life of praying, being and acting.” (3) “This response is what Luther called sanctification, or our being made holy, or growing spiritually. Life in Christ is not static, but alive and changing, growing and maturing. Salvation is assured, but how we live with that assurance of salvation is the challenging and growing part of our Christian journey.” (4)

So, what exactly is your identity? I ask myself often, and I promote you to ask yourselves as well… Are you remembering to fulfill the call of Christ and play the role of humble servant?

AMEN

**References**

(1) SundaysandSeasons.com

 Looking at Sunday, October 2

 Lectionary 27, Year C

 17th Sunday after Pentecost

(2) "Genuine Faith”

 Contributed by Dr. Jerry Morrissey on Sep 27, 2001

 Scripture: Luke 17:5-10

 Denomination: Lutheran

(3) Doing Your Duty

 Contributed by Gaither Bailey on Oct 4, 2019

 Scripture: Luke 17:5-10

 Denomination: Presbyterian/Reformed

(4) Duty Calls-Expected

 Contributed by Tim Zingale on Oct 2, 2001

 Scripture: Luke 17:5-10

 Denomination: Lutheran

**Luke 17:5-10**

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus instructs his followers about the power of faith and the duties of discipleship. He calls his disciples to adopt the attitude of servants whose actions are responses to their identity rather than works seeking reward.

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

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’? 8Would 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’? 9Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 10So 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!’ ”