



STORIES OF LIFE!

The Gospel of Luke

A Story of Impossible Faith!

Luke 17:1-6

Message #49 of 50 – S832

Sermon given on February 24, 2019



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

A Story of Impossible Faith!

Luke 17:1-6

Opening Comments

- Turn to **Luke 17**
- We continue a study through the Gospel of Luke – **The Stories of Life**
- As Christians, when we use the word faith, we mean that we believe in God as He has revealed Himself in the words of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments.
- Paul said in **2 Corinthians 5:7 - ...we walk by faith...**
- That means – how we live is determined by what we believe
- And here in the first half of Luke 17 we will look 3 activities of people who are walking by faith in God
- First one today, and the next two next Sunday
- We want to examine our lives to make sure these activities are present
- Let's pray and then get into the text for today
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **A Story of Impossible Faith!**
- Your life is A Story of Impossible Faith
- The first activity that ought to be present in your story is **Forgiveness**
- **Luke 17:1-2**
- Jesus says, it is impossible to go through this life without someone offending you
- No matter how wonderful you are, it is impossible to go through life without someone doing something wrong around or to you
- As long as there is sin and evil in this world – there will be offenses
- Jesus warns that we shouldn't be the ones doing the offending
- The word 'offenses' is from the Greek word that we get the word 'scandal' from = stumbling block – either preventing someone from righteous behaviors or encouraging sinful behavior
- 'millstone' very heavy stone used to grind grains

- Saying, it would be better to die a terrible death than to cause ‘little ones’ to stumble
- Probably referring to young believers – the tax collectors and sinners who were coming to Christ in Luke 15:1
- You are not going to get through this life without someone doing something wrong around you or to you
- What are you going to do when that happens? Jesus tells us
- **Luke 17:3**
- Remember, Jesus is speaking to His disciples – His followers
- A ‘brother’ is another disciple – even before the church officially started Jesus is telling His followers what to do when one Christian sins against another Christian
- When, not if, a Christian sins against you, first – ‘rebuke him’ – you have to tell that Christian what they did **Matthew 18:15**
- **Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.**
- Notice, that doesn’t appear to be a conditional statement – command
- A Christian walking by faith, tells another Christian when they have sinned against them
- ‘if they repent’ – if they admit they offended you – they might not – Matthew 18 tells you what to do if they don’t repent
- But if they do – forgive them = pardon them from their sin against you
- Notice also, that is not conditional – command **Leviticus 19:17**
- **You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.**
- As long as we withhold forgiveness, we bear their sins – we are carrying their sins around with us. Forgive – let it go
- But what if they do it again – Jesus knew we would ask that question
- **Luke 17:4**
- Jesus is using hyperbole – an extreme, unlikely example
- Had people tell me, I’ll forgive when they ‘really’ repent – sincere
- How sincere were the first six times this ‘brother’ repented? Not very!
- Jesus calls us to unreasonable acts of forgiveness.
- Even the disciples struggled with this concept
- **Luke 17:5**

- The ‘apostles’ are the twelve men Jesus chose to be His closest companions
- He told them more about the kingdom of God than anyone else
- They are acknowledging here that they are going to need more faith than they currently have to do what Jesus just told them to do
- It takes faith to ask God for more faith
- This teaches us that faith comes from God **Ephesians 2:8**

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...

- Paul also tells us that we play a role in growing faith **Romans 10:17**
So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- God has given us His Word, the Bible, so we have something to believe – you can’t believe what you don’t know

- The next verse is radical – and very convicting

- **Luke 17:6**

- The context of verse six is verses four and five
- Jesus called them to an impossible level of forgiveness
- And the disciples said, we believe in you but we’re going to need more faith to do what you are asking us to do
- Jesus’ response is that they do not need as much faith as they think they need
- A ‘mustard seed’ is tiny – a tiny amount of faith can do what you think is impossible
- Jesus often used whatever was around Him as illustrations
- As they are walking along, there is a full-grown mulberry tree nearby
- Humanly speaking, it was impossible for anyone to pull up that tree by the roots and plant it in the sea – grow to 25 feet or more
- In Mark 11, Jesus said you could move mountains with faith
- Is Jesus being literal or figurative? Figurative!
- There is no record for the last 2,000 years of anyone accomplishing this great feat
- So, what is Jesus trying to communicate?
- Basically, it is possible, through faith in God, to forgive
- And not just to forgive the little things, but the really big things that happen in our lives
- If someone has sinned against you a lot ‘seven times in a day’

- It is possible to forgive them through faith
- And it doesn't take great faith to forgive great sin – 'faith as a mustard seed'
- The more someone sins against us, the more their sins entangle our heart, mind, and soul – like a tree's roots growing down into us
- The more that tree of sin grows, the deeper those roots go, until it is impossible to pull it up
- And the longer those roots are entangled in your heart, mind, and soul, the more pain and suffering they cause – not just to you, but to everyone that your life touches – marriage, children, family, and friends all suffer too
- Not only that, but the roots of other people's sins get tangled up in your sin-nature and cause you to sin
- That is why Jesus is telling His disciples to forgive and forgive, and keep forgiving – until all those roots are pulled out
- The 'apostles' admitted that this was not going to be possible for them and asked Jesus, "Increase our faith."
- And then Jesus told them it is not as impossible as you might think
- So, how do we do it – how do we forgive when it seems impossible to forgive?
- I'm going to give you three super-simple steps to forgive anyone anything
- Step one – **Grow in Faith**
- Faith is believing God and His Word well enough to know what His will is and then applying that knowledge to actions in line with our beliefs and His will
- The more faith you need, the more you should be getting into God's Word so that you will know Him and His will better
- What is God's will? Does He want you to forgive someone?
- If He does want you to forgive, is it possible to forgive? **Mark 9:23**
Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."
- The man Jesus talking to responded **Mark 9:24**
Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"
- That is Step Two – **Ask for More Faith**

- The apostles believed Jesus, they just couldn't see how they could do it – asked for more faith
- If you are struggling to forgive someone, it is because you need more faith – ask God to give it to you
- God is not going to give to you what you need if you don't even have the faith to ask Him for it
- Jesus told us that this is one of the roles of the Holy Spirit **John 14:26**
But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

- **Step Three – Try to Exercise Faith**

- At some point you need to walk up to that mulberry tree, wrap your arms around it and try to pull it up by the roots
- This is an act of trusting God to help you to do the impossible
- If through the faith God gives you, it comes up, cast it as far away from you as you can – then rejoice in God and move on with your life
- If it doesn't, repeat steps one and two and then try again, and again, and again until God gives you the faith you need
- Three super-simple steps – simple, but not easy
- All it takes is a mustard seed of faith to move mountains
- Bring the tiny bit of faith you have to God – get to know Him better through His Word – believe God and ask Him to increase your faith
- Then try to do what you believe God wants you to do – and keep trying until God does it
- Listen, forgiveness is a powerful tool to free your heart, mind, and soul from the toxic, entangling roots of other people's sins
- And no matter how deep those roots go, God is able to set you free
John 8:34

If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

- If you don't feel free right now, God might be calling you to a deeper faith
- And that journey might involve forgiving the wrongs of others
- Grow in faith, ask God for more faith, and try to walk in faith
- Trusting God to do the impossible stuff in your life
- Then watch God change your story – a story of impossible faith – a story of forgiveness – received and given
- That sounds like a good story **Pray!**