

Sermon Topic: With Faith as Small as a Mustard Seed, You Can! by Rev David Ho, 18 Mar 2018

Sermon Text: Luke 17:1-10

Luke 17:1-10 (NIV)

*17 Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. <sup>2</sup> It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. <sup>3</sup> So watch yourselves.*

*"If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. <sup>4</sup> Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."*

*<sup>5</sup> The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"*

*<sup>6</sup> 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.*

*<sup>7</sup> "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'? <sup>8</sup> 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'? <sup>9</sup> Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? <sup>10</sup> 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.'*

**Proclaim and Claim? (v6)**

- Wrong Motives: Some have used this verse to proclaim & claim God's promises to fulfil sinful/selfish desires
- Wrong Application: I speak, therefore I have? What is Jesus really saying?

**It is important to understand the context!**

- Daily offences are to be expected (v1a) due to our fallen nature
- This should not be taken as an excuse for ourselves to sin, but is rather a warning, a woe to the offender (v1b – 3a) The phrase 'little ones' does not refer to children per se, but those who are new to the faith, or whose faith is immature.
- If someone offends you, rebuke (ie. confront the person about the issue) and forgive! (v3b)
- But if someone offends you again and again, still forgive! (v4)

**Why must we forgive?**

- Unforgiveness will lead to bitterness (Heb 12:15) Harbours bitterness is debilitating, and can prevent us from leading a fulfilled life.
- Bitterness leads to rage and anger, brawling, slander and malice (Eph 4:31)
  - ➔ Brawling is akin to quarrelling
  - ➔ Slander is akin to character assassination of someone else through words
  - ➔ Malice refers to the intention of getting even/taking revenge
- Bitterness could also be turned inward, leading to depression and psycho-somatic disorders

## Price of Unforgiveness

- You are hurting
- Hurting people tend to hurt others, often unintentionally. People don't enjoy being around an angry person
- Life is miserable (Job 21:25)
- It has been said that unforgiveness is like swallowing poison, and hoping the other person will die.

## How not to be miserable?

- Anger is an emotion that God has given us. We should feel angry when we encounter injustice. Feeling angry is not a sin in itself, but the negative actions that result from it are. Anger should lead to positive action, such as combating the injustice perceived.
- Keep a short account (of others' wrongdoings)
  - ➔ So that you don't have to live a life of regrets (Eph 4:26)
  - ➔ So that you don't have to live a life of bondage (Eph 4:27)
- Unforgiveness has been likened to choosing to stay trapped in a jail cell of bitterness, serving time for someone else's crime!

## The Act of Forgiveness

- It is not about an act of justice. Justice belongs to God. God chose to forgive us even though we did not pay for our sins.
- It is not about an act of love or compassion.
- Rather, Forgiveness is an act of faith! (v5). It is an act of trust in the Lord (Psa 37:5-6)

## Forgiveness is an Act of Faith

- This faith can grow (v6). Just as how the mustard seed grows, our faith is not stagnant. It grows as we exercise our responsibility to speak forgiveness (v6 - 'say to this mulberry tree') and witness God's work in moving the tree (ie. moving the obstacle in our lives).
- Servants have no rights. As servants of Christ, it is our duty. God doesn't have to thank us for doing our duty.
- Faith = obedience (v10). Our job is to obey. Eph 4:32 states various imperative words that require action - to be 'kind', 'compassionate' and 'forgiving', 'just as in Christ God forgave you'

## Faith is looking to Jesus

- Jesus has forgiven me much (Eph 4:23)
- Jesus set an example for me (Eph 4:23). I need to follow Him.
- Jesus commands me to forgive. Forgiveness is not an option for us.
  - ➔ Luke 6:37b: "Forgive and you will be forgiven"
  - ➔ Matt 6:14-15:
- Jesus will set us free! (Psa 37:1-8)
  - ➔ "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It is the power that breaks the shackles of selfishness" - Corrie ten Boom

- ➔ Corrie ten Boom is widely regarded as an exemplar of Christian faith in action. In her book, *The Hiding Place*, she recounts her experience of forgiving a former guard of the concentration camp that she and her sister suffered in. She observed that ‘Forgiveness is not an emotion, it is an act of will... God will supply the feeling.’

Psalm 37:1-8

**Of David.**

- 1 Do not fret because of those who are evil  
or be envious of those who do wrong;
- 2 for like the grass they will soon wither,  
like green plants they will soon die away.
- 3 Trust in the Lord and do good;  
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
- 4 Take delight in the Lord,  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- 5 Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in him and he will do this:
- 6 He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,  
your vindication like the noonday sun.
- 7 Be still before the Lord  
and wait patiently for him;  
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,  
when they carry out their wicked schemes.
- 8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;  
do not fret—it leads only to evil.

***The Prayer of Forgiveness***

“Jesus, thank you for forgiving when my offence against you is even greater! You have set for me an example to forgive and have commanded me to do so. I want to be obedient to you and I know you are a just and compassionate God, and you will set me free. And so today, I chose to forgive in Jesus’ Name “so and so” for “this and this” that was done to me, I will set him free as you will set me free. Thank you Jesus for setting me free. Amen!”

**Summary**

- Daily offences are to be expected
- Woe to the offender
- Rebuke and forgive
- But if offence occurs again, still forgive!
- Forgiveness is an act of faith
- Faith = Obedience

## **Reflections**

- Are you living a miserable life because of unforgiveness?
- Will you let Jesus set you free?
- Will you proclaim forgiveness and claim your peace?