Luke 17:1-19 // Rise and Go! Your faith has made you well.

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[0:00] This is Luke chapter 17 verses 1 to 19 and can be found on page 1050 of the Church Bibles.! That's Luke chapter 17 verses 1 to 19.

Jesus said to his disciples, things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. 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.
So watch yourselves. If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them, and if they repent, forgive them. 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.
The apostle said to the Lord, increase our faith. 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.
Suppose one of you has a servant ploughing 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? Won't he rather say, prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink.
[1:26] After that, you may eat and drink. Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? 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. Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, Jesus, master, have pity on us. When he saw them, he said, go, show yourselves to the priests.
And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.
And he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, we're not all ten cleansed. Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?
[2:29] Then he said to him, rise and go. Your faith has made you well. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God. Thanks so much, Ali, for reading.

Good morning, church. If we've not met before, I'm Martin, the lead pastor here. And it'd be great if you could keep your Bibles open at Luke 17. There's an outline on the other side of the notice sheet.
You'll find that helpful as we look at this together. And let's pray. And as for God's help, let's pray together. We thank you so much, Heavenly Father, for the gift of your word and the promise that the unfolding of your word gives light.
And so we ask that you'll be with us now as we turn to your word. May Jesus be our focus. May your spirit be our guide. May your glory be our supreme concern.
For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, sometimes we can miss out on something because we just overlook it or take it for granted. The story is told of William Randolph Hearst, who 100 years ago was the equivalent to that time of a billionaire because he was the owner of a media empire of newspapers and radio.
[3:43] He was like the Rupert Murdoch or Kendall Roy of his time. And one of his pastimes was collecting works of art. He had a vast collection. And one day he read about a particular painting and decided he must have it for his collection.

So he sent two men to Europe from the United States to track down this painting and said to them, pay whatever you need to to get it. He wanted his hands on it.

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And after seven weeks searching in Europe for the painting, the two men contacted Hearst to tell him, you can't buy the painting. You already own it.
It's in your warehouse in California. So he'd been missing out on something because he just overlooked it and he missed its value. Well, today we see that kind of theme here in Luke's Gospel because we have nine lepers who meet Jesus and they know where to find him again, but they miss out because they overlook how precious he is.
And the disciples who already know Jesus, they seem to miss that you can come to him for all the resources you need to obey him. The miracle with the lepers functions a bit like a recap of the story so far in Luke's Gospel, a salvation recap.
[5:09] It pulls forward themes that we've been seeing in Luke. So we're going to start with that and then we're going to move back into the early verses of the chapter and those instructions for disciples because they flow naturally from what it means to have been saved by Jesus.

And the points are on the sheets we're going to see that when you come to Jesus, exemplary grace is discovered, extraordinary obedience is required, and enabling power is on offer.
So first of all, exemplary grace is discovered. Ten lepers experience a miracle. Let's notice that in verse 12, it's as Jesus is going into a village that these ten lepers approach and they stand at a distance.
In other words, they don't live in the village. They have to come to him on the outskirts and keep their distance because their skin condition is an infectious one.
So they would have been living in a colony, ostracized, isolated, disfigured. It was immense suffering. And they cry out to Jesus for pity, for help.
[6:18] And Jesus gives them a very interesting instruction. He sees them and he says in verse 14, go and show yourselves to the priests.

That's very interesting because if you had leprosy and then leprosy kind of was a term that was used to govern a number of different skin conditions. And if you were healed, if you were better having had a skin condition like that, you would go to the priest having been made better and they would issue a certificate that then meant that you were able to take your place again in the normal community.
But Jesus sends them to the priests before they've been healed. So it tests them. Are they willing to take Jesus at his word? Do they trust that he has got the power and he has the compassion, the willingness to cleanse them, to heal them?
And they set off. And we don't know how gradually it happened but Luke just summarizes it for us in verse 14. As they went, they were cleansed. Picture the wonder and relief as each of them found that their skin was being miraculously restored.
Limbs were being reformed. And it demonstrates a principle when it comes to the Christian life and knowing God that help is found on the way of obedience.
[7:47] Help is found on the way of obedience. And that is a principle that we need to trust. Whenever the Holy Spirit convicts us in our lives, that we need to step out in faithful obedience of God.

Especially if you feel challenged by God's word in the Bible to do something that you really can't understand, why that would be good for you and right in the Christian life. Or you feel challenged by what the Bible says to give something up for God that you can't really imagine going without.
As we step out in obedience, trusting God's word, we open up our lives, even if that's been very costly for us, we open ourselves up to experience Jesus helping us on the way.
So the leper's experience a miracle and it's life changing and it's restorative. But what else has he done? He's revealed to them who he is.
So we read verse 15. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back. And that gives us our next thing we notice in this encounter, the Samaritan who discovers a savior.
[9:02] The Samaritan models for us, if we look down at verses 15 and 16, we get this model of three things we should do when we've experienced in our lives goodness from God.

So first, in verse 15, he glorifies God. You see that? Praising God in a loud voice. And the next thing he does is he worships Jesus in verse 16. He threw himself at Jesus' feet.
And those two things go together. Because Jesus is God's son, come into the world, he explains to us that his father's desire is that he is honoured as his father is honoured.

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So if we want to thank God and glorify God, we glorify Jesus and honour him. And then in verse 16, the third thing he does is he thanks Jesus. He thanked him.
He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. This is a life now reordered around Jesus. And our Roots community have been reading Romans this year.
[10:02] And in Romans chapter 1, we hear about the nature of the human problem that God has made himself known to us in creation all around us.

And naturally, our human choice is we don't want to glorify God and we don't want to give thanks to him. And so we turn from him and we suppress the truth.
Well, this man now has received this transforming blessing from Jesus and it moves him to put that right, to glorify God and give thanks to him.
And verse 16 adds, and he was a Samaritan. He's a foreigner to the promises of God. The Samaritans had a different religion.
It was a distorted understanding of the Old Testament. And then Jesus asks three different questions in verse 17. Were not all ten cleansed?
[11:02] Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner? We expect, we can imagine, can't we, where the other nine were.

They're off enjoying life now, aren't they? Celebrating with family, but they've not come to Jesus to give thanks for what he'd done for them. And there's something in the response of the nine to Jesus that we see all around us today.
That here in Scotland, in our times, God has been very good to us. It's true of everyone around us. I mean, even in Scotland, our whole value system, the ways that we think humans have rights and that the weak should be cared for by the strong, these values are from Jesus.
Jesus. But naturally, how do we treat him? A bit like a man who keeps getting amriths and deliveries arriving at his door every day and opening them and there's all these brilliant things inside and enjoying them and never bothering to stop and think about the person who's sending them all to us.
But because the Samaritan comes back, he gets given much more. And we see that in verse 19. Have a look. Then Jesus said to him, Rise and go.
[12:22] Your faith has made you well. Now when we first hear that, we might think what's happening is it's just affirming what happened to all ten of them. That they called out to Jesus and they were healed.

But it's more than that. He was cleansed in verse 14 and he was healed in verse 15. But now, he is saved. Literally, Jesus says, Rise and go.
Your faith has saved you. And that word saved was the same word that was used back in Luke chapter 7 when the sinful woman was weeping at Jesus' feet at the house of Simon the Pharisee. And he said to her, Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. It's the same word. The same thing has happened. In other words, because the Samaritan man came back and put his faith in Jesus, he is made right with God.
He's got full and free forgiveness. He gets more because he came back. Here is the principle from the event, I think. Even if you start praying to Jesus in your life because of a felt need like the ten lepers did, if you return to him, you discover he has more to give you than that.
[13:38] He has come to deal with a deeper need for all who run to him and give thanks, how wonderful it is to see that Jesus has more to give you.

But how tragic then to think that many people who get so much from Jesus never turn back. Many of us are living well thanks to the kindness in our lives of a generous God.
And we might think of young people who get to grow up in a home where their parents love Jesus and trust Jesus. And it gives them this great start in life. If that happens to you, the blessing is enormous.
It gives you stability, you value hard work, you're optimistic, you take an interest in other people because that's been modeled to you. And people have that experience and they spend the rest of their life enjoying the benefits of that start in life.
But if they would just come to Jesus and fall at his feet and thank him, they find he has more he wants to give you. He's come to do nothing less than restore you to God.
[14:51] So Jesus' words again in verse 17, were not ten cleansed, where are the other nine? Good question. But for the Samaritan, everything has now changed.

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He's not just healed physically, he's got forgiveness, a family, a future. His past, it's all been dealt with. He's got hope for tomorrow. Why was it the Samaritan?
Well, it's very fitting that it was because it fits with what we're seeing in Luke's Gospel that back in Luke 13 at the start of this section, someone asked Jesus, are only a few people going to be saved?
And Jesus' answer was, many people are going to be saved. He said people will come from east and west, all kinds of people are going to be saved. But what we're seeing is that the good news of the kingdom has come in Jesus and it's news of free grace when you turn back to God.
And some people stay on the outside. It's the unlikely people, it's the unexpected people, the people who know they need forgiveness, who are coming in.
[16:00] There could be another reason as well. If he was the only Samaritan out of the ten, the only foreigner when Jesus said, go show yourself to the priests, everyone else would have gone to the same place, the Jewish priests.

The Samaritans, they have a different religion. So I love the idea that when the Samaritan walked away, he would have been left thinking, but which priest do I go to?
Do I go with everyone else? Or do I go back to the Samaritan way of worship? Who is my real priest now? And while he's thinking about it, he gets made clean.
And does that help him realize, hang on, Jesus is the priest. I'll go and show myself to him. Just as today, it is helpful when you know Jesus is all you've got because you find that he's the only one that you need.
And God has given us every reason to live lives of obedient gratitude. Our lives now in joyful, thankful obedience to him because he's cleansed us and he's healed us and then he saved us.
[17:22] And the lessons for the disciples in the earlier parts of the chapter, they flow out from that encounter with Jesus as a savior. They're about the culture that we are to now have as a community of his people because of the way that he has saved us.

So we'll turn there now. We've seen exemplary grace is discovered. Secondly, extraordinary obedience is required. I think what holds these different instructions together is the idea of obstacles to faith.
First, the ways we might become an obstacle to faith in someone else. In verses 1 and 2 of chapter 17, Jesus warns us to watch out that we don't cause a younger Christian, a newer Christian, to stumble in their faith.
He says, if you were about to do something that would cause a younger Christian to stumble in their faith, do you know what would be better for you to get hurled into the ocean with a heavy stone around your neck?
It'd be better to die a horrible death now than do something that would cause someone else to fall away from their faith. And that only makes sense because of what we've just seen, that faith is so important, isn't it?
[18:40] It's so critical. It affects our whole eternity. When I was a child, I remember going to London and being overwhelmed by the bright lights of London and everything around me.

I remember there being a big billboard up to discourage people from taking drugs and it had a horrible picture on it and it said, drugs, the effects can last forever.
And I remember it because someone had graffitied underneath it only if you buy the really good stuff. Well, what we're seeing in Luke's gospel is faith, the effects of it last forever.
So it's only right that we should have a real concern for people around us in our church family, a concern that affects what we're praying for and the choices we make that they would grow in their faith and not slip back.
It's the other side of the coin, I think, to the Apostle Paul's model of the heart we have in the Christian life in Philippians where he is in prison and he's weighing up out in the open in the letter to the Philippians.
[19:50] He doesn't know whether he's going to live or die. Which should he choose? Well, to die would be better for him, by far, because he'd go and be with Jesus. But he'd rather stay alive so that he might have longer to help them be strengthened in their faith.

That's what life is for now. And so here, that we should take the utmost care not to be someone who causes someone else to stumble and trip in their faith.

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Another obstacle that we see in these verses is in verses 7 to 10 and it's becoming puffed up. We've seen that the Pharisees were puffed up and proud. And so Jesus tells this parable to teach us to remember that no matter how much God does through us and in us, we're only ever just servants doing our duty.
That comes out in verse 10. And it's not saying that Jesus is a master like the one he describes in verses 7 to 9 in his demands.
Jesus has been a very generous master to us but we are still to remember our place before him.
And then in the middle in verses 3 and 4 Jesus calls us to guard our own faith and the faith of people around us in how we respond to sin.
[21:07] Look at verse 3. Jesus says watch yourselves. If your brother or sister sins against you rebuke them and if they repent forgive them. So the surprise here is not that a Christian sins.

We should expect that all around us. One thing we have in common with everyone else who's a Christian is that we had a terrible sin problem that we needed forgiveness for and that brought us to Jesus.
So we should expect as we spend time in community with people who all have that shared issue that people will sin against us. But when we're sinned against by another Christian Jesus says watch yourself.
Why? It could be because the most natural thing to do when we're sinned against is to respond sinfully to sin. We think that when we experience ungodly behavior from another it justifies bad behavior back.
And we also need to watch out for resentment when we're sinned against. So Jesus gives us two commands for when we're sinned against that go completely against the way the world says to respond to sin.
[22:27] He says first you have to go to them and rebuke them in verse three. And that is hard isn't it? We don't want to do that because we don't want to face the confrontation with them.

We prefer talking about it to other people. It's easier and it's more rewarding because we find people who sympathize with us and tell us how terrible it must be for us what that person said or what that person did and they might affirm us as well in thinking terrible things about that person. We find the right people. It's especially hard in our culture because we say today in our cultural moment that if you're the victim then you are in the right about everything.
You're the goody if you're a victim in our culture. And so it's costly to be willing to lose that position as you seek restoration and to put things right with the person.
And Jesus says go to them and point out their fault. Rebuke them. And that takes courage especially if they've hurt us.
[23:41] We might feel very nervous about going to see them to point it out. And we might discover when we go to see them that we were wrong, that we've misunderstood the situation.

But Jesus says in verse three if they repent we have to forgive them. And we might think well I might just be able to do that if they're really truly sorry and they really do change.
But then he says in verse four even if they do the same thing again and again and again and repent and repent and repent we have to keep on forgiving them. Forgive and forgive and forgive and forgive and forgive and forgive and forgive.
forgive. This is a costly obligation. What we naturally want to do when someone does wrong against us is to make them pay for the pain we have felt by making them suffer.
But even though forgiveness is costly Jesus demand that we forgive is for our good because the person who suffers most when we won't forgive is us. As we go back again and again to reliving that thing that they did or that thing that they said and we fall back in those same thought patterns and resentment takes root in us and we just can't find release from what they've done.
[25:06] So Jesus commands us to forgive and we need to forgive so that we're not controlled by that anymore. And forgiveness has two stages. This isn't in the verses but it's what people always ask about when we have a sermon thinking about forgiveness.

Internal forgiveness is always required. It's the attitude within us that says I'm willing to bear the cost of what that person has done or said to me. I'm going to release them in my heart from the debt that they have incurred to me from what they did.
That's internal forgiveness and we're called to do that. The second act in forgiveness what we might call external forgiveness is being reconciled to the person and that's only required if they repent.

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if they repent we reconcile as we forgive them. That doesn't mean the relationship has to be exactly the same as before. There are situations perhaps especially when you think of marriages but friendships as well where although the person has been forgiven there might be new boundaries in the relationship to protect us from further harm.
but what does it look like for someone to truly repent? Well they're saying sorry and in saying sorry true repentance involves four things.
[26:25] It might not be that the conversation is as formal as this. I think it's quite unusual to have the conversation as formal as this to say all four things but when they're saying sorry what their meaning is or what I'm meaning when I say sorry and repent is I accept responsibility I admit what I did was wrong I acknowledge that it's caused hurt and pain and I'm asking you for forgiveness.

And then what does true forgiveness look like? Well when we say to someone I forgive you we're making four promises. We're saying I won't dwell on what you did. I won't bring up again what you did and use it against you.
I won't talk to others about what you did. It might be that we feel we need to in some situations for our ongoing protection that others would know but where the motive is just to kind of offload I won't do that.
I won't talk to others about what you did and I won't let what you did stand between us. So this takes great courage doesn't it to go and see someone and have that kind of confrontation and great strength to be willing to forgive them when they repent.
But does it seem too difficult for us? It did to the disciples. You see that? So look at what they said next in verse 5. They call out Lord increase our faith.
[27:52] They think we need more faith to do what you're asking us to do in verse 5 and that brings us to our third point. So we've seen exemplary grace is discovered, extraordinary obedience is required, thirdly enabling power is offered.

So look at Jesus reply in verse 6. 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.
The mulberry tree was a huge tree that had a complex and widespread root system. And the idea of uprooting a great tree and throwing it into the sea fits with this theme of finding the strength to forgive.
In Hebrews chapter 12 we get this warning that's also in Deuteronomy 29 that we should see to it among our church that no root of bitterness springs up among the people of God and defiles many. A root of bitterness. And when someone has wronged us, the resentment we feel, the bitterness, can feel very deeply rooted in our own hearts.
[29:03] Where will we find the strength to uproot it? Well the mistake the disciples make is to think that what we need is more faith. That the amount of faith we have is the issue.

This is a really common mistake in the Christian life. To get fixated on how much faith we've got or don't have. I think you can see it if you think of it like this.
If I was going in for brain surgery and I said to you I'm not worried about it because I've got great faith in my brain surgeon. You'd immediately start thinking about the surgeon wouldn't you? You'd think oh she must be a really good brain surgeon. But if I say to you about a Christian friend they've got great faith in Jesus we start thinking about their faith instead of about Jesus.
It's the wrong focus. We don't need to focus on having great faith. We need to focus on the object of our faith. On a great saviour. And that moves us back today to picture Jesus back with that Samaritan man cleansed of his leprosy and saved from his sin.
[30:14] Because he models for us what Jesus stands ready to do for everyone who comes to him. And if you're a Christian this is your reality. He has healed you.

He's cleansed you. He has saved you. And I don't know what it cost Jesus to cleanse the ten men with leprosy of their leprosy. But his compassion towards the lepers inspired a Belgian missionary Father Damien.
He went to a Hawaiian island Molokai where he'd heard that there was a colony of lepers. People had been forcibly isolated to this island. And Damien devoted his life to caring for the lepers in this colony.
He built homes for them. A church, a hospital, an orphanage. He improved sanitation. He helped bury the dead. Moved to help them. He lived and worked among the lepers for 16 years.

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And then over time his supporters in Belgium noticed a change in the letters he was writing home. That instead of talking about the lepers as they he started using the words we.
[31:23] We lepers. Damien contracted the disease himself and he died on Molokai in 1889. To help the lepers ultimately cost Damien that he became one of them.

And it gives us a glimpse of what it cost Jesus to save us from our spiritual sickness, our sin. In that the only way was to become one of us.
To suffer the consequences we deserve. And he did it so that he could lift us from it and heal us. So in verse 11 if you look there Luke tells us what's going on as the 11 as the 10 men find Jesus and approach him.
He's on his way to Jerusalem. That darkness has been hanging over Jesus since Luke chapter 9 when we read that he set his face towards the city where they'll put him to death.
For us forgiving others takes great strength. And this is strength exercised for your forgiveness and mine. That Jesus set his face like flint towards Jerusalem.
[32:34] Unflinching when he was warned of what would await him there. And for us forgiving others is costly. And here is what is costly.

That all of Jesus' life every minute he has said yes to God and no to sin. Day and night. Night and day. His joy. His delight. His choice.
Yes to God. No to sin. And now he goes to Jerusalem into the hands of wicked men who will lift him on a cross so that he can take our place because we are people who said no to God and yes to sin. When we grasp more deeply what he has done for us it empowers us to do what he asks of us for him. So we reflect on the word today to us.
You might be here today and in danger of being like those nine lepers who never came back to Jesus. Well don't overlook him. How wonderful to be encouraged to see today that when you come to Jesus and give thanks to him he has more for you.
[33:46] He's got more to give you. Or you might be here today and faced with a real obstacle to living the life of faithful obedience. It seems too hard to you.

Well let's keep looking not to our faith and how big it is but to our saviour and what he has done for us. Let's pray together. Just a moment of quiet to reflect on God's word to us.
Amen. Almighty God and loving heavenly father we acknowledge afresh today that we have sinned through negligence and through weakness and to our own deliberate fault.
And we are truly sorry. We know we are weak to keep your commands and often lack the strength to do what you ask of us.
We thank you that Jesus grace is amazing and for this picture of our salvation story in the gratitude of the Samaritan man cleansed healed saved saved from his sins.
[35:30] Thank you that story is our story. And may our lives be marked by that same posture of gratitude. We thank you that you have done far more for us than we deserve and could ever know.

Jesus we worship you. We give you thanks. We praise you for your grace. And we ask Holy Spirit would you so impress on our hearts that grace shown to us that we overflow with lives that encourage those around us in their faith and give you glory.
In Jesus name. Amen.

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