

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 17- Luke 17:1-10

280- The Chaos of Humility- Part 3

June 07, 2015

Luke 17:1-10

1 He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!

2 "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.

3 "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

4 "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.

7 "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 to eat'?

8 "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 afterward you may eat and drink'?

9 "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?

10 "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.'"

To the Glory of God

Now as I told you at the beginning of our examination of these ten verses- four weeks ago- that these statements by the Lord seem, on the surface, to be *disjointed* statements that have nothing to do with each other. But upon closer examination- we find that- in reality- these ten verses show the great contrast between true godly humility and the smug self-righteous arrogance of fallen Man.

And the amazing thing about humility is the chaos that it brings to this setting. Make no mistake about it- the true genuine humility that Jesus is talking about here has divided this group, and it will divide any group between those who are willing to repent and be humble and those who are so steeped in false religion that it actually prevents them from repenting. So there is a hostility in this setting, a very tense atmosphere- a chaotic blanket that is draped over men who have been made arrogant hypocrites by the doctrines of demons and those who are being made free from all hypocrisy by the Lord Jesus and who tremble at God's Word.

Now we have already covered a lot of ground in the first two messages on this Passage and I'm not going to go back over what we have already seen, but we need to understand that the Bible clearly and repeatedly says that God *resists* the kind of pride- that would dare to argue with God, that would set up their own man-made beliefs in direct opposition to what the Lord God has said. So the Bible teaches that God *resists* the proud and that He gives Grace to the humble. In fact, 500 years before Jesus was born- the prophet Isaiah wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and said this in **Isaiah 66:2b**:

... to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

And yet we see here in **Luke 17**- that one of the main hindrances to being that kind of broken and trembling people is false and man-made teaching of the Pharisees that distorted or hid or that outright changed the Divine Truth of Scripture. Because all false religions exalt the works and the labors and the deeds of Man while *minimizing* or outright *eliminating* the gracious Work of God in Christ. And, therefore, it is true to say that it is categorically *impossible* for anyone who is deceived by false teaching to actually be humble.

Now people who are deceived can be soft spoken and they can be somewhat reserved in their demeanor, and they can manifest some *trappings* of humility- and many people will then assign the label of "humility" to them and they will be praised for their great humility- but because they do not know and love the Truth- they do not truly fear God, and, therefore, they are *not* truly humble.

We have to understand that the only religion in the world that gets humility right is Biblical Christianity. All other religions and human philosophies are all wrong. All of them. And therefore- because that is true- the only religion in the history of the world that teaches and explains and empowers people to actually obtain true genuine humility is Biblical Christianity. And the only people on earth who are actually humble are Christians- those who have been born from above and are faithfully following Jesus Christ wherever He goes.

Now contrast that with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the public face of religiosity in Israel in the 1st Century. Everybody looked to them as being experts of the Truth of Scripture- which at that time was the Old Testament. These men studied the Scriptures twelve hours every day from the time they were twelve years old until they retired at age 50 or died. Most of the upper echelons of Pharisaical Judaism could recite the entire Old Testament from memory. They established Synagogues throughout Israel so they could teach the people what God had said. They were so fastidious about keeping the Law- that they tithed their seeds. And yet they didn't recognize God Incarnate when He stood before them.

The Pharisees are the only group of people in the entire Bible that Jesus never said anything good about. These religious people were so deceived that they rejected the only Way to Heaven. They despised the only Messiah Who could forgive their sins. They turned away from the only Truth that God Himself gave. And therefore- they were the epitome of arrogance, self-righteousness, and pride. That is what false teaching does to everybody who embraces it.

The Pharisees loved the chief seats that were reserved for people who had done great things. They loved to take the high place in the synagogue. They loved to be at the main table at the banquets. They loved to be called names of dignity and honor in the market place. They loved to be seen as exalting themselves above the people. Everything they did, whether it was their praying, or their fasting, or their giving,

any kind of behavior, even the way they moved around, even the clothing that they wore all manifested this self-exaltation, this pride- the stench of human virtue.

They considered themselves to have achieved spiritual knowledge- and they were proud of it. They thought they had a special relationship with God- and they were proud of it. They saw themselves as having merited their religiosity and their self-righteousness acceptance with God- and they were happy about that. And yet these self-deluded unsaved men were the paragons of religion. So the single most unqualified group in Israel were the guardians of that which was Divine in the 1st Century and were the ones who had the authority to teach the Scriptures. But they were *not* humble.

And so here in **Luke 17**- the Gentile Dr. Luke quoted the Incarnate God in the first ten verses to give us at least four aspects of true and genuine Biblical Humility that we should see and believe and apply to our daily lives:

1. Humble people do not wish to offend others unnecessarily (**Luke 17:1&2**)
2. Humble people forgive (**Luke 17:3&4**)
3. Humble people confess their own weakness and need for God (**Luke 17:5&6**)
4. Humble people seek no recognition for their Service to God (**Luke 17:7-10**)

And two weeks ago- we went over the first one, and today I want to look at the next three. So let's look at the second aspect of true humility:

2. Humble People Forgive

Luke 17:3&4

3 "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

4 "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Now we live in a day when we are bombarded with psychological gobbly-gook that tells us in one way or the other that human beings are not responsible for what they do, and, therefore, they are not accountable for the sins they commit. We have been taught now for over 50 years that sin is not an evil for which God will judge- but rather a "disease" like cancer, and that people are "pre-disposed" to certain sins, and that they can't help it any more than people can help getting sick with cancer.

And we have been over the origins of this false concept of sin many, many times- that the foundation behind why the fields of science and medicine and the various counselling disciplines all changed after agreeing with the Bible for many hundreds of years. There was no scientific discovery where somebody found a germ that causes people to sin, there was no gene found in the brain that makes people sin, and there wasn't some breakthrough in medicine that allowed for the great change. The change was made in the mid- to late 1960's for the basest of all reasons: simply because the federal Government began to pay doctors to treat behaviors that had long been considered by the scientific and the medical and the counselling disciplines to be sinful.

So suffice it to say that the Holy Bible doesn't teach what these people are teaching. But because the Church has basically abandoned counselling and handed it over to the godless and pagan culture- we now have a virtual sea of people whose lives have been ruined by being deceived into thinking that sin is something for which they must take a pill to overcome or go through therapy or simply keep on sinning but to try to get rid of the guilt that is associated with their sin.

But Jesus re-emphasizes here that sin must be repented of. And, of course, the word "repent" comes from the Greek word that has to do with having a "change of mind". So the way that God the Holy Spirit brings true and genuine conviction into a person's life- is to inform their mind with Divine Truth. Because *believing* wrongly leads to *living* wrongly. It is *impossible* for a human being to live- long term- contrary to what he believes. Therefore, what a person believes is paramount. So the first thing that must be captured by Divine Truth is the mind, and the mind will then inform the heart and then the behavior of the person will change.

So you should see the mind as a drinking glass. And even though the glass *appears* to be empty- it is, in fact, already filled with air. And

as water is poured into the glass- the water *displaces* the air that is already in it and the glass is then filled with water.

And it is impossible to fill the glass with water without displacing the air that is already in the glass. Water can only fill the glass to the degree that the air that is already in the glass is displaced. And so if you fill the glass half-way- you have only displaced half the air.

So the Bible teaches that every human being who walks around is already filled with knowledge. People already have an idea about right and wrong, and about truth and error, and about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. People already have an idea about Who God is, and what God has or has not said, and what God does or does not require of them, and these ideas are what is called "Doctrine"- and everybody already has Doctrine in them.

The problem is that most or all of what people already believe about the important issues of life is wrong- it is not true; it is contrary to what God Almighty has revealed in Holy Scripture. And so in their case- the doctrine that these people have is false doctrine; it is man-made doctrine; it is, in fact, the doctrine of demons. And to the extent that people believe and think in opposition to what the Bible teaches- to that same extent- they are deceived. And their life will reflect that deception.

So we must understand that it is just as sinful to "believe" wrongly as it is to "do" wrongly because believing always leads to doing. So the goal of preaching and teaching Divine Truth is to inform the mind of people who have been regenerated by God the Holy Spirit so that these redeemed people can see where they are off base and where they have been deceived and where bad or false or man-made doctrine has deceived them so they may have a "change of mind" or, in other words, so they can repent and come into alignment with the Owner and Creator of the Universe and stop being at odds with God. And this causes them to either start or stop believing wrongly about that particular issue, and that correct belief will always, and in all cases, manifest itself in a change of behavior. So the goal of all true Biblical conviction is transformation- a change of behavior-so that the person may then live in accord with Truth and bring Glory to God.

False religion, on the other hand stops all that. False religion comforts people in their sin. False doctrines and wrong teaching not only lead people into sin- but it actually stifles or quinces the Holy

Spirit so that conviction is either dismissed or overlooked. So if you understand sin as people exalting themselves and their own ideas above the Knowledge of God- then you understand how false religion promotes people to buck up against the Will and Word of God and be arrogant. But since false teaching also quinces the Spirit- we see how false teaching also keeps people enslaved to that arrogant way of life.

So Jesus re-affirms here that sin is not a disease that you can take medicine to alleviate but that sin must be repented of through being genuinely convicted by God the Holy Spirit through the insertion of Divine Truth. So as you sit and hear the Word of God being preached and taught, as you study God's Word at home and in Church, as you pray to the Owner and Creator of the Universe, as you participate in ongoing godly fellowship, as you partake of the Lord's Supper and baptism, and as you yield yourselves in service to others- Divine Truth becomes more clear, and as that Truth is poured into you- it *displaces* the error of false and man-made beliefs, and as Truth consumes you- it leads to a transformation of behavior that comes into alignment with what God has revealed in Scripture and you then live for the Glory of God and the fullness of your own joy!

And so repentance should be one of the most common things that true believers engage in. We should be in a state of constant transformation; a state where Divine Truth is *constantly* being poured into us and false beliefs and man-made doctrines are *constantly* being confronted and challenged and overcome by the sheer force of the weight of the water of the Word. And therefore- since all truly saved people are in that process of being sanctified by the Lord Christ- it should be very easy for us to issue mercy and forgiveness to the one who has repented- even if he has repented several times.

So one of the signs that you are saved and God is truly dealing with you is that you are convicted by God the Spirit about things you do and things you believe on a constant, ongoing basis. And one of the things that should scare you to death is that you have gone for any length of time and God is no longer dealing with you and bringing conviction to your life.

Because just in case you think you have arrived- and are walking in sinless perfection and *that* is why you are not being convicted by God- let me be the first to say to you that the real reason that God is not convicting you is because you are already so deceived and so distant

from God- that your conscious has already been seared with a hot iron and is hard as stone.

And this was the case with the Pharisees, who could stand in the very Presence of the Incarnate God and hear perfect words from the world's only perfect Preacher and not be convicted.

So Jesus is teaching here that truly humble people have been granted with the gift of being both *able* and *willing* to repent and so they repent a lot, and truly humble people are those who are supernaturally *empowered* to forgive, and so they forgive a lot while arrogant and self-righteous people do not repent and they do not forgive. So Biblical Christianity teaches both repentance and forgiveness.

You see, having the gift of being able to see yourself as God sees you is the greatest gift in all the world, and being empowered by God the Holy Spirit to *suppress* your natural inclination to rebel against God and to actually see and understand that what you are doing is wrong and sinful and displeasing to God- is the greatest gift in all the world. And being able and willing to cry out to God or a brother or sister for forgiveness is one of the greatest acts of humility that the world has ever known. And being both able and willing to forgive those who have genuinely wronged you makes you more like God than almost anything else.

And so whatever religion, whatever belief system, whatever philosophy that you hold to that would *prevent* you from repenting or that would talk you *out* of repenting or that would *prevent* you from forgiving is a real bad and evil and false religion. And I would encourage you to flee from that religion as fast as possible because it has made you self-righteous.

3. Humble People Confess their Own Weakness and Need for God

Luke 17:5&6

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you."

So what was the response that the Apostles gave to what Jesus just said in verses 3&4? It was to ask Him to increase their faith. In other words- they were confessing that they realized that they were lacking and that they *needed* Jesus to supply both the supernatural power and the will to repent of sin and to forgive the sin that others repented of. In other words- what Jesus just told them in verses 3&4 was so earthshaking and so powerful and so unlike what they had been taught from the Pharisees- that they realized that to actually *be* the kind of people who could both repent and forgive- they needed Jesus to increase their faith. And so Jesus says in verse 6,

If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.

In other words- Jesus is saying, "*You're right. You do need a stronger faith.*" So He *affirms* the great need that they just confessed. And that is a sign of genuine humility- that you understand that all good and godly things come from God. It is coming to understand that you can't work humility up by rubbing the two sticks of your own will power and your own human ingenuity together. That only produces pride. So genuine humility doesn't come from *within* yourself- it comes from *outside* yourself. Humility isn't an internal characteristic of fallen human beings- it is an external gift from God. Because there is no good thing in us. So Humility comes from outside yourself- from God. So true and godly humility must be *given*; it must be *granted* by God. And it comes to those who confess their great need for God to help them- not those who think they have reach the pinnacle of spirituality and no longer need Him.

So even though the concept of faith has been maligned in recent years by the Health, Wealth and Prosperity preachers who peddle their false doctrine- true faith is never designed to make you look special. True faith is not designed to add to your ability to boast about how much faith you have and how much you trust God. True faith, genuine faith, Biblical faith exalts Jesus Christ and bring us into the best place we could ever be in- a place of broken trembling humility.

Now look at the mustard seed for a minute. Mustard has been around a long time. Mustard is an herb and it's been used in the ancient Middle East for many centuries. And there were a number of seeds that

were commonly used domestically that the families ate. And of those seeds- the smallest of those common seeds in the land of Israel that they used for food- was the mustard seed. Now it isn't the smallest seed- there are several seeds that are actually smaller than the mustard- but it is the smallest of the common seeds that people ate in the 1st Century.

Now a typical mustard bush or tree could be twelve to fifteen feet in height and in width as well. And that's a lot coming from a tiny, tiny little seed. And so Jesus is simply saying this, "*If you just had mustard-seed kind of faith...*what does that mean?... in other words- "*an ever growing faith*". If you just had the kind of faith that grows and expands and develops- you could do amazing things.

Now according to Alfred Edersheim's books- some of the rabbis of the 1st Century taught that the mulberry tree had roots that would survive for 600 years. And so for somebody to uproot a mulberry tree would be a real big deal. And then to have it move across the sky and plant itself in the middle of the sea would be even more significant, that would be absolutely supernatural.

So what in the world is the Lord saying here? Is Jesus teaching that if we had enough faith we could actually move a tree? Or if we had enough faith we could actually move a mountain from here to there? No. And I have been in Church for almost half a century and I have never seen anybody move a mountain. Never. The most popular pied-piper on TV that hangs his hat on supposedly having great faith can't move a mountain. All that does is to trivialize what Jesus is saying here.

Jesus is speaking in a proverb. He's talking *metaphorically*. He's talking in *analogies*. And everybody back then understood that. It's just people today who are fleecing the sheep who teach otherwise. But the people standing around Him on that day all knew that Jesus wasn't talking about moving trees around.

The point of our Lord's lesson is simply this: if you will trust Jesus and trust Jesus' strength and Jesus' Power to do what is supernatural- then Jesus will do what needs to be done so that God's Will will be carried out and so that God will be glorified.

So Jesus is teaching in a manner of speaking that a small but growing faith, a small but ever expanding faith can do unimaginable things. Why? Because as you entrust yourself to God and to His Will and to His Power- God will do His Work through you. The Lord is not teaching silly frivolous things that are designed to puff you up and

make much out of you. Rather He is doing the very opposite. Jesus is teaching here what truly humble people do and how humble people pray and how humble people depend totally on God. And how do the Apostles respond to this? They beg Him for more faith. How do the Pharisees respond to this? They scoff at Jesus.

So this shows the great distinction- the chaos between those who have been graced by God to be humble and those who haven't. The Apostles are humble enough to understand that living like Jesus is teaching- is way beyond them; that it just isn't natural. And instead of scoffing at what Jesus is teaching like the Pharisees- these men are graced by God to be broken over the enormity of what Jesus is teaching.

So while the self-righteous and arrogant Pharisees are laughing and mocking and scoffing at what Jesus is teaching- the Apostles are asking, *"How in the world are we going to live such lives of repentance and forgiveness? How are we going to exist in such a high standard? How is it even possible for a human to live like this? How can we live a life that doesn't cause people to stumble at all? How can we be so generous and magnanimous when harmed? How can we live that way?"*

And so they blurt out,

"Increase our faith!"

Jesus says, *"If you just put your trust in Me, I will empower you to live this way. And you can go forward boldly to do My Will and to do whatever I have commanded you to do!"*

The Apostle Paul was confronted with the very same dilemma of realizing that what God had called him to do wasn't hard- it was impossible. And he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 3:17-21

17 ...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

21 to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

So we come into the world and we are the weak but powerful people. We are powerful in God- even though we ourselves are weak. Because through us the Truth of God is proclaimed. Through us godliness is manifested. Through us comes illustrations of grace and forgiveness and mercy and compassion with sinners. And God uses all of that as the means by which He works His powerful saving Work. So in our own human weakness- we are enabled to do these things.

So a truly humble person is marked by restraint from offense, and he has a readiness to forgive, and he manifests a recognition of weaknesses, and finally #4:

4. Humble People Seek no Recognition for their Service to God

Luke 17:7-10

7 "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 to eat'?"

8 "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 afterward you may eat and drink'?"

9 "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?"

10 "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.'"

Now right in the middle of all this Teaching- all of a sudden Jesus tells a Parable. Now why does He do this? Because we need to remember that Jesus is doing two things simultaneously here:

1. He is bringing Truth to the Apostles
2. He is condemning the Pharisees

Now, there's something you need to know about the Pharisees in case you didn't know it already- these guys loved to be honored. It's

really important to them as a part of their belief system that the people give them honor. Jesus said back in **Matthew 23:5**:

... they do all their deeds to be noticed by men...

So these religious hypocrites did everything they did so they could look religious so that people would praise them and think well of them. That's why they loved the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogue and the respectful greetings in the marketplace. That's why they loved to be called "Teacher", to be called "Father", and to be called "Leader". They loved that stuff because they were self-righteous and all self-righteous people love to have people tell them how great they are. So we see that God had not visited them with humility.

So we have to understand the danger here. You see, along with the recognition of personal weakness and ever growing trust in God's Power- as God begins to use you and as you live a life that honors Him, as you teach His Word faithfully and as you set an example of spiritual life and as you exhibit grace and mercy- but because you're still fallen- you begin to say to yourself- *"You know, I'm not doing half bad at this thing of Christian living. My life's having a profound effect on other people. And through me somebody came to Christ over here, and somebody came over there. And I've been teaching the truth and people are loving that. And my life is sort of in order, and I'm glad for that, and I was real kind to those folks. And I can just imagine how impressed God must be with me right about now."*

So because we are fallen creatures- we can mess up anything- including our service to God. And so sin will cause our service to God to be the gateway to our pride, and our pride will bring about our downfall. So we must take heed to ourselves.

But we must understand that there is nothing that is uglier than "Spiritual Pride". Of all the great sins of Man- this one is at the very top. Because spiritual pride is the manifestation of the failure to understand that everything done to God's Glory is done by grace. And it all goes back to a very simple but profound Principle that is taught in **1John 4:19**- please turn there with me:

We love, because He first loved us.

Now in context here- the Apostle John is talking about loving God. And the word "because" comes from the Greek word that means: *the reason or the cause for something else to exist*. So the *cause* of our love for God, or the *reason* why we love God, is something that we did not do- but something that God did.

So John is teaching here that the *source* or the *origination* of our love for God is God's Love for us- that the Bible says was from before the foundation of the world. So before He ever made the world- God chose to set His Love upon us- even though we were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad. And it is that setting of God's Love upon us that is the *cause* of our love for God. So what John is saying is this:

Our love *for* God is a gift *from* God

... which I would suggest to you is true about every single aspect of our service to God. So for example- we pray to God- not because we possess some internal dedication of our own- but simply because God has so wondrously dealt with us to change us to such an extent that we now desire to pray. And we obey God- not because we have some internal goodness about ourselves- but simply because God has so marvelously change us that now we *desire* to obey our Savior. And then God has to sovereignly empower us to obey because we lack the ability to obey as well. So everything we do *for* God is simply a loving *response* to the sovereign Work that God has already done in our hearts. And so because that is true- it is the height of spiritual pride to want to be praised for doing what we are supposed to do anyway.

So Jesus addresses this with a very simple story. And he begins by saying,

Which of you having a slave, plowing or tending,"

... and this takes us into the very simple agricultural economy of Israel- where it was common to have slaves. And the word for slave is *doulos*, which refers to: a "*bond slave*"- which meant that he was attached to the owner and he lived in his master's house, and was cared for and provided for by the master.

And this is a perfect illustration of the relationship between a genuine believer and Jesus Christ- which is a pure and wonderful kind of relationship- where Jesus is always the Master and we are always the slave. And we live in His House and we are cared for by our Master- Jesus Christ. So Jesus says,

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 to eat

Now this is a picture of a small farm, probably a one-servant household, and the slave here is a guy who does everything. He has to take care of the sheep and he has to take care of the field, and then his job is also to prepare a meal for the master.

And so Jesus is making an absurd statement here. No master would ever tell his slave this. So then Jesus gives the correct way this Master/slave relationship would work in verse 8:

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 afterward you may eat and drink'?

And then Jesus gives the meaning of it all:

9 He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?

10 "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.'"

So this is the way this whole system worked back then. The slave had responsibilities. And he understood exactly what his responsibilities required. He knew that what was required was that he worked a long hard day and he took care of the field and he took care of the sheep and then he came in and he fed his master. And the slave understood that his work was not finished until he had given that meal to the master. And that was common back in the 1st Century.

So Jesus is asking a question that everybody already knew the answer to. And the answer was:

Nobody

... nobody would thank the slave because the slave needs to do his duty. So preparing this meal is part of the responsibility of the slave. And so the slave is not to come in there smelling like sheep and dirt. He is to go and clean up and get the Master something to eat. And the Master will eat and the slave will serve Him, and then the slave's day is over, and afterward he will eat and you drink.

So Jesus is asking a rhetorical question that doesn't need an answer because everybody already knows the answer. Nobody is going to tell the slave that he doesn't have to finish the day's work. They all understand that the master will say, *"Feed me first- put me first- and then come and eat."*

Now the word that Jesus used here for "thank" is *charis*, which means: *grace*. So the master is not going to grace this man or favor this slave for simply doing what he is supposed to do. Because he hasn't done anything special. And we need to remember that this slave is not a volunteer- he's a slave that has been bought and paid for by the master.

Now the research professor of New Testament at the Ecumenical Institute of Jerusalem, Kenneth Bailey, has done a lot of work in studying the life in the villages of the ancient Middle East, and he says,

"In a technological age with a 40-hour week, powerful labor unions and time and a half for overtime, the world of this parable seems not only distant but unfair. After a long, hard day in the field such a slave surely has earned the right to a little appreciation, some comforts and a few rewards. But Jesus is building on a well-known and widely accepted pattern of behavior in the Middle East of that day. The master/slave relationship and its ancient modern expression implies acceptance of authority and obedience to that authority and it's a matter of honor. Yet the outsider needs to be sensitive to the security that this classical relationship provides for the slave, and the sense of worth and meaning that is deeply felt on the part of a slave who serves a great man. These qualities of meaning, worth, security and relationship are often tragically missing from the life of the modern industrial worker with his 40-hour week. The slave offers loyalty, obedience, a great deal of hard work, but with an authentic Middle Eastern nobleman, the benefits mentioned above are enormous."

Bailey goes on,

"Certainly no one in any Middle Eastern audience could imagine any slave expecting special honor after fulfilling his duty. The master is not indebted to him for having plowed the field or guarded the sheep. We're not even dealing with harsh hours imposed by an unfeeling master, but rather the normal expectation of a relatively short day's chores."

And so, everybody knows that he just did what he was supposed to do. Jesus applies it in verse 10.

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.

The bottom line is that it is a privilege to serve the Lord. It is an honor to carry His Name and to be adopted into His Family. It is the height of privilege to suffer and even die for Jesus because all that we deserve is eternal deamination for our many sins, and yet God has shown us grace. So don't pat yourself on the back and think that God's really impressed, and that He owes you some special favor simply because you are serving Him. You're going to get your eternal reward in heaven- and that is enough- so don't get uppity down here. Be grateful that you have the honor of serving such a great King.

We need to remember that we are not worthy of some special merit for obeying Jesus as though God is now indebted to us. Our service is only reasonable, it is proper- we *should* serve the Lord. He is worthy of that.

And if in our service- we suffer- then we should say what Paul said in **Romans 8:18:**

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

So this is all about grace. And the fact of the matter is, no matter what we've done, no matter how well we've done it, we have never been able to do what God is worthy of. So we are unworthy bond slaves.

So truly humble people *reject* honor. They *run away* from praise because they know they're in God's debt. They know they're still living under grace. You've already been justified by grace, and you're being

sanctified by grace, and you'll be glorified by grace, and you'll be rewarded in heaven forever by grace. So everything is by God's Grace. Nothing that God does is done because we have earned it or that God is obligated to give it. That false teaching produces arrogance- not humility.

So we never deserve anything God gives us. And the flip side of this is that in Heaven Jesus will bring us into His banquet and our labors are done, the Lord will sit us down, and the Bible says He will serve us. But that is so glorious because it is totally against the grain of our expectation. And that's going to happen in Heaven. That's in our heavenly reward.

But as long as we're here in this life- we can never do what God deserves. And it is a wonder of wonders, as Paul says again in **1 Timothy 1**, that God has chosen to use us who are the very chief of sinners. And the humble never forget that reality.

So when we serve God- we serve Him from an *inferior* position. And the genuinely humble never imagine that they have served God so well as to somehow have impressed Him and obligated Him to give them some special honor, as though He is in their debt. That's pride. And it's ludicrous. And so, Jesus is calling for a kind of life that is just so far away from the Pharisaic example. And you and I are called to this life today. To be humble, so as to always submit to Scripture in doctrine and practice, and never lead anyone into error or sin. To be Humble so as to always forgive those who sin against us no matter how many times they do it. To be Humble so as to be aware always of our own weaknesses and have an ever growing dependency on the Power of God. To be Humble so as always to recognize that even our best service falls far short and we are unworthy servants who have only done what we have *ought* to have done, and hardly even that, ascribing all God's gifts then to His Amazing Grace.

So I plead with you this morning to Humble yourself like this and you will manifestly demonstrate that you are a true child of God, and one day God will exalt you and the Lord will seat you at His table and He will serve you.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.