**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 14** Luke 17 Sin/Faith/Duty/Ten Healed of Leprosy!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture, and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 59-69.

According to Wiersbe, what two elements are involved when we offer forgiveness to others? Which is more important? Why?

1. Read Luke 17:1-4 along with the article below entitled, “What is a millstone in the Bible?”

A millstone is a stone used to grind grain. When grain is milled, two stones are actually used: the bed stone, or base, which remains stationary; and the runner stone, which turns on top of the base, grinding the grain.

In Bible times the millstone was a common item, and it is mentioned in several contexts in the Bible. The millstone was in fact so integral a part of society that the Mosaic Law forbade taking someone’s millstone in pledge (Deuteronomy 24:6). The millstone was needed to grind grain to make bread and sustain life, so taking someone’s millstone would be like taking his or her life in pledge.

A millstone was both extremely hard and exceedingly heavy, and it provided a vivid illustration for anyone who had experience with millstones. In the book of Job, God mentions the millstone in His description of a beast called Leviathan. This animal was so strong that God compared its impenetrable skin to a millstone: “Its chest is hard as rock, hard as a lower millstone” (Job 41:24). The “lower” millstone is the base stone upon which the upper millstone turns. A millstone was also chronicled as an instrument of death. A woman killed Gideon’s son Abimelech by dropping an upper millstone (the runner stone) from a tower. The stone landed on his head and crushed his skull (Judges 9:53; 2 Samuel 11:21).

Perhaps the most famous mention of a millstone in the Bible is in Jesus’ warning against leading His children astray. He said, “If anyone causes one of these little ones-those who believe in me-to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea” (Mark 9:42).

Causing a child of God to sin will bring severe judgment. If you would find it hard to   
swim with a millstone hanging around your neck, you should think twice before tempting God’s child.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. In verses 1-3, Jesus is teaching the disciples the importance of not causing another   
   person to sin.
2. What metaphor does Jesus use to reveal how serious this issue is to God? Why is   
   not sinning so important to God? Explain why this is such a serious sin (to cause someone else to sin)?
3. Read Matthew 19:13-14 along with 1 John 2:12-14. “One of these little ones”   
   (verse 2) refers either to little children or those young in the faith (recent converts). How precious are little children to Jesus? Why do you think little children and recent converts are precious to God?
4. What do you learn from the following texts?

* Galatians 6:1-4

**Personal reflection:** Are you willing to go to your brother who has sinned and lovingly try to restore him? If not, why not?

* Romans 14:13-23

**Personal reflection:** Are you participating in activities that might cause a weaker (recent convert) brother to stumble spiritually? If yes, how do you plan on changing this activity?

* Matthew 18:21-35

**Personal reflection:** Do you have anyone you need to forgive who perhaps sinned against you in particular? What do you plan on doing?

1. Read Luke 17:5-6 along with Matthew 17:14-20 and the article below entitled, “What does   
   it mean to have mustard seed faith?”

Faith is so vital to the Christian life that Scripture tells us that, without it, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Yet faith is such a powerful gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Christ told His disciples that, with just a tiny measure of it, the size of a mustard seed, they could move mountains. So, what does it mean to have “mustard seed faith”?

We see the reference to “mustard seed faith” twice in Scripture. First, in Matthew 17:14-20, we see Christ’s disciples unable to exorcise a demon from a young boy, even though Jesus had previously given them the authority to do this very thing (Matthew 10:1). When they inquired of Jesus why they were not able to drive the demon out, the Master replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there’ and it will move; Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:14-20). Next, in Luke 17:6, Jesus tells His disciples, “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.” By using the uncommonly small mustard seed as an example, Jesus is speaking figuratively about the incalculable power of God when unleashed in the lives of those with true faith.

We know that this statement about moving mountains and uprooting trees by faith is not to be taken literally. The key to understanding the passages is the nature of faith, which is a gift from God. The power of faith reflects the omnipotent nature of the God who bestows faith on His own. The mustard seed is one of the tiniest seeds found in the Middle East, so the conclusion is that the amount of faith needed to do great things is very small indeed. Just as in the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32), Jesus uses rhetorical hyperbole to make the point that little is much when it comes from God. The mustard seed in the parable grows to be a huge tree, representing the tiny beginnings of Christianity when just a few disciples began to preach and teach the gospel. Eventually, the kingdom grew to huge proportions, encompassing the entire world and spreading over centuries.

So, too, does the tiniest bit of faith, when it is true faith from God, grow to immense proportions in the lives of believers and spreading out to influence all they come into contact with. One has only to read histories of the great men of the faith, such as Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, to know that superhuman feats were performed by those whose faith was, at one time, only the size of a mustard seed.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. What lesson is taught by Jesus to his disciples by speaking figuratively, not literally, about the mustard seed?
2. What do you learn about faith from the following tests?

* 2 Corinthians 5:7
* Ephesians 2:8-9
* Hebrews 11:1
* Hebrews 11:6
* Hebrews 11:13

1. Read Luke 17:7-10. [Be sure to read Wiersbe’s commentary on these difficult verses to help you understand. Wiersbe writes, “This story emphasizes faithfulness to duty no matter what the demands might be, and the argument is from the lesser to the greater. If a common servant is faithful to obey the orders of his master who does not reward (thank) him, how much more ought Christ’s disciples obey their loving Master, who has promised to reward them graciously!” (Wiersbe, p. 62).
2. What type of Master is Jesus (John 13:1-17; 15:13)?
3. What is our duty to God as followers of Christ?
4. Read Luke 17:11-19 along with the article below entitled, “What is the story of the ten lepers in the Bible?”

Luke 17:11-19 records an account of ten men who had infectious skin diseases, commonly translated as “leprosy.” In the Israelite community, when a person discovered a rash or   
skin disorder, he or she had to go to the priest for examination. The priest then determined whether this was a contagious disease and whether the person was to be declared ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 13:1). Jewish law prohibited anyone with such a disease from associating with the general community. They had to be isolated and many times   
lived as outcasts until they died (Leviticus 13:45-46). This was necessary in order to   
keep infectious diseases from becoming an epidemic. But, for those afflicted, it could be   
a life sentence.

Jesus had healed several individuals who had leprosy or some type of infectious skin disease (Luke 5:12-14; Mark 1:40-42; Matthew 8:2-3; 11:5). In Luke 17 ten men who were part of a leper colony approached Him together, but they remained at a distance, as per the law. They called out to Him, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” Without seeming to do anything to heal them, Jesus merely gave the instruction to go show themselves to the priest.

At the moment of Jesus’ instruction, the men were still lepers. No physical change had yet taken place. But, in faith, the men obeyed. As they began to walk to the priest, they were healed. Jesus always required faith on the part of the person who asked for healing. Many times He asked those who wanted to be healed, “Do you believe that I can do this?” (e.g., Matthew 9:28; Mark 9:20-24). He required a demonstration of faith on the part of the lepers in asking them to walk away, even before He had healed them.

The Bible does not record how far they had walked before being healed. However, only   
one man returned to thank Jesus for the healing. Luke makes special mention of the fact that the one who returned was a Samaritan, a person despised by the Jews (Luke 17:15). Jesus expressed disappointment that the other nine had not thought to give praise to God for their healing. From this we learn that God desires for us to express our thankfulness to Him for all He does in our lives

Even though Jesus did not withhold healing from the nine who did not thank Him, He made   
a point of noting their lack of gratefulness (Luke 17:18). Because they had faith, all ten   
were physically healed. But Jesus’ final words to the grateful Samaritan imply that this man received spiritual healing in addition to the cleansing of his skin. After the man was already healed of leprosy, Jesus said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well” (verse 19). It could be that the man’s return to fall at Jesus’ feet gave him spiritual wholeness in addition to the physical wholeness he had received. When we take time to acknowledge the Giver   
and not just the gifts, we please the Lord as well as enjoy the spiritual healing that comes from gratefulness.[[3]](#footnote-3)

[The following questions are taken from Wiersbe’s commentary on pages 70-71.)

1. How would you describe the lepers’ approach to Jesus before He healed them? Is this   
   the way many people approach Jesus today? If yes, why?
2. Read Matthew 11:28-30. What can we learn from their positive example about taking   
   our needs to Jesus?
3. How was their response to Jesus’s command, to show themselves to a priest, an   
   act of faith?
4. What are some examples of God’s work in our lives that we tend to take for granted?
5. Read Psalm 145:1-12. What words or phrases from these verses reveal the response   
   to His goodness that God desires?
6. Read Luke 17:20-37 along with the article below entitled, “What did Jesus mean when   
   He said, “The kingdom of God is within you”?

In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus says, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you” (NKJV). The context of Jesus’ statement is a question put to Him by His Pharisee detractors who had asked when the kingdom of God would come (verse 20).

Jesus’ answer was that the kingdom of God was not coming in the manner the Pharisees were expecting. The kingdom would not be inaugurated with spectacle or splendor; there would be no great and magnificent leader who staked out a geographical claim and routed the Romans; rather, the kingdom would come silently and unseen, much as leaven works in a batch of dough (see Matthew 13:33). In fact, Jesus says, the kingdom had already begun, right under the Pharisees’ noses. God was ruling in the hearts of some people, and the King Himself was standing among them, although the Pharisees were oblivious to that fact.

Various translations render the Greek of Luke 17:21 various ways. The phrase translated “within you” in the KJV and NKJV is translated as “in your midst” in the NIV, NASB, and NET; “among you” in the NLT and HCSB; and “in the midst of you” in the ESV. Earlier versions of the NIV had “within you” with a marginal note suggesting “among you.” There   
is obviously a difference between saying “the kingdom of God is within you” and “the kingdom of God is among you.”

“Within you” comes off as an unfavorable translation, seeing that Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees at the time. Jesus was surely not saying that the kingdom of God resided within the Pharisees’ hearts. The Pharisees opposed Jesus and had no relationship with God. Jesus in other places denounced them as “whitewashed tombs” and “hypocrites” (Matthew 23:27).

The better translation would be “in your midst” or “among you.” Jesus was telling the Pharisees that He brought the kingdom of God to earth. Jesus’ presence in their midst gave them a taste of the kingdom life, as attested by the miracles that Jesus performed. Elsewhere, Jesus mentions His miracles as definitive proof of the kingdom: “If I drive out demons by   
the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20).

There are three popular interpretations of Jesus’ words in Luke 17:21 that the kingdom of God is within you (or among you): 1) the kingdom of God is essentially inward, within man’s heart; 2) the kingdom is within your reach if you make the right choices; and 3) the kingdom of God is in your midst in the person and presence of Jesus. The best of these interpretations, it seems, is the third: Jesus was inaugurating the kingdom as He changed the hearts of men, one at a time.

For the time being, Christ’s kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). One day, however,   
the kingdom of God will be manifest on the earth (Isaiah 35:1), and Jesus Christ will rule   
a physical kingdom from David’s throne (Isaiah 9:7) with Jerusalem as His capital (Zechariah 8:3).[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. Spiritually speaking, there are only two kingdoms: the kingdom of man (darkness and death) and the kingdom of God (light and life). We are all born as members of the kingdom of man. When Jesus came, he ushered in the kingdom of God. Read Colossians 1:13. How does one transition from the kingdom of man to the kingdom of God?
2. To which kingdom do you belong? How certain are you?
3. The kingdom of God is not fully here at present. When Christ returns, He   
   will bring the full consummation of the Kingdom of God to this earth. This   
   is why believers pray, “Thy Kingdom Come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Are you prepared for this day? If not, what should you do to be ready?

1. “What is a millstone in the Bible?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed July 17, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/millstone-Bible.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “What does it mean to have mustard seed faith?” Got Questions Ministries, accessed July 17, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/mustard-seed-faith.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “What is the story of the ten lepers in the Bible?” Got Questions Ministries, accessed July 17, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/ten-lepers.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “What did Jesus mean when He said, “The kingdom of God is within you”? Got Questions Ministries, accessed July 20, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/kingdom-of-God-within-you.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-4)