

CHAPTER 17

LIVING FORGIVEN: THE MISSIONARY COMMUNITY



There is a saying, “Christians are not perfect, just forgiven.” Chapter 17 emphasizes this sentiment. It presents how the forgiven are called to live. Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem. His teachings and parables in this chapter are directed to his followers. He is forming more than missionaries. He is developing a missionary community. One can reflect back to Chapter 15 that contains the parable of the Prodigal Son. Jesus teaches his disciples more about how sons should behave and live together once they have been welcomed back to the Father’s estate.

FOUR SAYINGS OF JESUS ABOUT SIN, FORGIVENESS, FAITH AND SERVICE

Lk. 17: 1-10



Day 1. (Read and reflect upon Lk. 17:1-4)

17:1 Jesus ¹ said to his disciples, “Stumbling blocks are sure to come, but woe ² to the one through whom they come! **17:2** It would be better for him to have a millstone ³ tied around his neck and be thrown into the sea ⁴ than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. ⁵ **17:3** Watch ⁶ yourselves! If ⁷ your brother ⁸ sins, rebuke him. If ⁹ he repents, forgive him. **17:4** Even if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times returns to you saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive ¹⁰ him.”

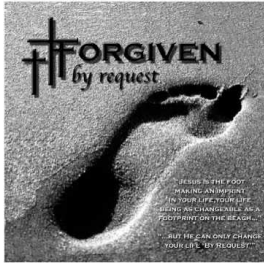
1. In what way are scandals so harmful to the work of the Church? Give an example.

2. What kind of attitude does Jesus want his disciples to have towards sinners?

SCANDAL: The Greek word *skandolon* implies that a person sets a trap to lure another person into misdeeds and sin.

Jesus acknowledges that there will always be temptations and occasions of sin. He likewise states in the next passage that his disciples will fall into sin. Yet he uses a most strong image to warn anyone who calls himself or herself his follower from being an evil influence that will lead others away from God. “*He would be better off thrown into the sea with a millstone around his neck.*” The scandal lies in luring of leading other away from a saving relationship with His Father.

FORGIVENESS:



Jesus not only warns his disciples not to cause another to sin, he calls them to be careful about their attitude towards sinners. He commands his followers to correct a wayward disciple. The fraternal correction flows from a love and concern for the sinner. It is not a correction to make oneself feel superior or self-righteous. Likewise, his disciples must always be willing and ready to forgive those who have offended them when forgiveness is sought. The willingness to forgive must be set without limits.

Day 2: . (Read and reflect upon Lk.17: 5-9).

17:5 The ¹¹ apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” ¹² **17:6** So ¹³ the Lord replied, ¹⁴ “If ¹⁵ you had faith the size of ¹⁶ a mustard seed, you could say to this black mulberry ¹⁷ tree, ‘Be pulled out by the roots and planted in the sea,’ ¹⁸ and it would obey ¹⁹ you. **17:7** “Would any one of you say ²⁰ to your slave ²¹ who comes in from the field after plowing or shepherding sheep, ‘Come at once and sit down for a meal?’ ²² **17:8** Won’t ²³ the master ²⁴ instead say to him, ‘Get my dinner ready, and make yourself ready ²⁵ to serve me while ²⁶ I eat and drink. Then ²⁷ you may eat and drink?’ **17:9** He won’t thank the slave because he did what he was told, ²⁸ will he? ²⁹

1. What is Jesus’ point about faith in verses 5-6?

2. For you, what is most difficult about correcting a friend who is choosing the wrong path?

3. What kind of attitude does Jesus want his disciple to have towards successfully serving in God’s name?

GENUINE FAITH. Lk 17: 5-6

Following Jesus’ demand that his disciples give good example and forgive others the apostles feel inadequate to the task. They ask him to give them more faith. At first it seems a reasonable enough request. We all need to have stronger faith. However, Jesus points out that their problem is a lack of faith. Jesus makes it clear that the challenges of discipleship do not drain faith. Their faith is a power that must be put into action. The amount of faith is not important, but the kind of faith is! If they have a genuine response to God and trust in His Son the even faith the size of a mustard seed would have a wonderful power.

SERVING FROM LOVE NOT FOR REWARD. Lk 17: 7-10

.17:7 “Would any one of you say ²⁰ to your slave ²¹ who comes in from the field after plowing or shepherding sheep, ‘Come at once and sit down for a meal’? ²² **17:8** Won’t ²³ the master ²⁴ instead say to him, ‘Get my dinner ready, and make yourself ready ²⁵ to serve me while ²⁶ I eat and drink. Then ²⁷ you may eat and drink’? **17:9** He won’t thank the slave because he did what he was told, ²⁸ will he? ²⁹ **17:10** So you too, when you have done everything you were commanded to do, should say, ‘We are slaves undeserving of special praise; ³⁰ we have only done what was our duty.’” ³¹

Jesus warns his followers not to keep a record of their good deeds. The Pharisees fell into that trap. Jesus wants to protect his disciples from this type of greedy and self-centered living. He emphasizes that it should be a servant’s joy to serve the Lord. Disciples are not to serve God to be rewarded. Their service is an expression of their love for their Heavenly Father. (*Recall the attitude of the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son*).

THE TEN LEPERS. Lk 17: 11-19



17:11 Now on ³² the way to Jerusalem, ³³ Jesus ³⁴ was passing along ³⁵ between Samaria and Galilee. **17:12** As ³⁶ he was entering ³⁷ a village, ten men with leprosy ³⁸ met him. They ³⁹ stood at a distance, **17:13** raised their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy ⁴⁰ on us.” **17:14** When ⁴¹ he saw them he said, “Go ⁴² and show yourselves to the priests.” ⁴³ And ⁴⁴ as they went along, they were cleansed. **17:15** Then one of them, when he saw he was healed, turned back, praising ⁴⁵ God with a loud voice. **17:16** He ⁴⁶ fell with his face to the ground ⁴⁷ at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. ⁴⁸ (Now ⁴⁹ he was a Samaritan.) ⁵⁰ **17:17** Then ⁵¹ Jesus said, ⁵² “Were ⁵³ not ten cleansed? Where are the other ⁵⁴ nine? **17:18** Was no one found to turn back and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ⁵⁵ **17:19** Then ⁵⁶ he said to the man, ⁵⁷ “Get up and go your way. Your faith has made you well.” ⁵⁸

Since Luke 9:51 Jesus has been on his great journey to Jerusalem. All along the way he has tried to call the Pharisees to a change of heart and also teach his disciples so that they may participate fully in his mission. The Pharisees have not opened their minds or hearts. The apostles have not yet demonstrated genuine faith. It is fitting that Jesus encounters the ten lepers along the way. The healing and especially the response of one leper gives a clear example of faith to his followers.

Day 3.

1. All ten lepers demonstrated faith in Jesus. What is unique about the Samaritan’s response to Jesus?

2. How does the spirit of the Samaritan express the true spirit that a disciple needs to have?

3. For what are you thankful to Jesus, today?



Leprosy was a dread, incurable disease. One who suffered from leprosy was considered a profound sinner. The disease was considered their punishment. Yet leprosy made all equal in their state of depravity. It put Jewish and foreign people on the same level. All were considered unclean and untouchable. So they associate together freely in their misery.

In the encounter with Jesus all of the ten lepers demonstrated faith that he could heal them. All ten were obedient to Jesus. They presented themselves to a priest as was prescribed by law. Believing in the power of Jesus' word all the ten were healed while on the way to show themselves to the priest. They all believed in the power of Jesus to heal their bodies. Yet only one truly believed in Jesus. The Samaritan recognized that Jesus was more than a healer. He returned to fall at the feet of Jesus praising, thanking and adoring God for sending Jesus. This is the kind of faith that Jesus looks for from his followers.



“Jesus said to the man, ‘stand up and go your way; your faith has been your salvation.’



In the person of Jesus the Kingdom of God has begun for all humanity, Jew and Gentile alike. It is revealed in his words and deeds. The failure to respond and return to Jesus by the other nine lepers shows how few recognize the Reign of God in Jesus. What is the response today?

COMING OF THE REIGN OF GOD. Luke 17: 20-21.

17:20 Now at one point ⁵⁹ the Pharisees ⁶⁰ asked Jesus ⁶¹ when the kingdom of God ⁶² was coming, so he answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs ⁶³ to be observed, **17:21** nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is ⁶⁴ in your midst.” ⁶⁵

Day 4.

1. Why did the Pharisees not encounter the Reign of God?

2. When do you most experience the Reign of God in your life?

The Pharisees confront Jesus again. They demand to know when the Reign of God that Jesus has preached would come. The popular concept about the Reign of God was that it would be preceded by great signs and wonders. People clung to the dream that God's time on the earth would begin with spectacular signs, which would propel Israel to world dominance.

Jesus states that external signs and earth shaking wonders that all could see will not precede the Reign of God. Instead it will be recognized through faith (like the faith demonstrated by the Samaritan leper). The life, words and person of Jesus usher in the Reign of God, right here and right now. The Kingdom is in their midst!

DAY OF THE SON OF MAN. Lk. 17:22-37



Having corrected the Pharisee's false beliefs about the Reign of God, Jesus starts to clarify the disciples' misconceptions about the end times.

Day 5. (Read and reflect Lk. 17:22-37).

17:22 Then ⁶⁶ he said to the disciples, "The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days ⁶⁷ of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. **17:23** Then people ⁶⁸ will say to you, 'Look, there he is!' ⁶⁹ or 'Look, here he is!' Do not go out or chase after them. ⁷⁰ **17:24** For just like the lightning flashes ⁷¹ and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. ⁷² **17:25** But first he must ⁷³ suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. **17:26** Just ⁷⁴ as it was ⁷⁵ in the days of Noah, ⁷⁶ so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. **17:27** People ⁷⁷ were eating, ⁷⁸ they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage – right up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then ⁷⁹ the flood came and destroyed them all. ⁸⁰ **17:28** Likewise, just as it was ⁸¹ in the days of Lot, people ⁸² were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building; **17:29** but on the day Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ⁸³ **17:30** It will be the same on the day the Son of Man is revealed. **17:31** On that day, anyone who is on the roof, ⁸⁴ with his goods in the house, must not come down ⁸⁵ to take them away, and likewise the person in the field must not turn back. **17:32** Remember Lot's wife! ⁸⁶ **17:33** Whoever tries to keep ⁸⁷ his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life ⁸⁸ will preserve it. **17:34** I tell you, in that night there will be two people in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ⁸⁹ **17:35** There will be two women grinding grain together; ⁹⁰ one will be taken and the other left." ⁹¹ **17:36** [[OMITTED]] **17:37** Then ⁹² the disciples ⁹³ said ⁹⁴ to him, "Where, ⁹⁵ Lord?" He replied to them, "Where the dead body ⁹⁶ is, there the vultures ⁹⁷ will gather." ⁹⁸

1. What does this passage say about the end of the world?

2. What are some of the popular beliefs about the ‘Rapture.’?

Luke refers to the end of the present age as, “The day the Son of Man is revealed.” He firmly believes that it will happen. He more firmly asserts that we have no idea when it will happen. He rejects any teaching that holds that signs and wonders will precede the final days.

Luke presents Jesus reflecting upon two major events from the Book of Genesis in which God intervened in human history. He points out that in neither case were there any warning signs.

- **In the days of Noah. Lk. 17: 26.** There were no warnings to the people about the great flood in the time of Noah. (Gen. 6-9).
- **In the days of Lot. Lk. 17:28.** There were no warnings to Lot about the devastating destruction of Sodom. (Gen. 18: 16-19)

When the final time comes, God will continue the pattern of the past. There will be no signs and warnings, no bells and whistles. When the end comes there will be absolutely no turning back.

Rapture??? Lk. 17:30-36.

Luke is not painting a picture of what some mistakenly call the ‘rapture.’ Contrary to popular religion, the Bible does not make any reference to such a thing. We don’t anticipate Jesus beaming some up to heaven while others remain in the destruction of the world. Instead, Luke stresses the importance of living each day as if it were the Day of the Son of Man.

In the beginning of this Chapter the Pharisees asked when the Kingdom would come. Now the disciples ask where the Final Coming of the Lord would happen. These are wrong questions. The only correct question and concern for the disciple are “Am I ready now?”



Fr. Judge and Faith:

You will advance in the spiritual life in proportion to the living, burning faith you have. How can you get a faith like that? You must ask for it. The apostles asked for it. They said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” (Lk 17:15) How many of us ever ask God to give us faith. Faith may be increased or faith may be diminished. Faith may be preserved or it may be lost. We must pray for that faith that Christ loves and let it be simple faith. The faith of a poor, decrepit woman may be greater than that of a Doctor of Divinity because she has heart in it. Pray for this faith.

The Church does not need rich men and women today. The Church does not need the clever nor the powerful but the Church does need men women of simple faith. Without faith the Gospel message is in vain. We build our Churches hopelessly if our people are not animated by a living, true faith.

(Fr. Judge. Conference to Missionary Cenacle Apostolate, April 13, 1932)