

Lost...But Finding Our Faith
Luke 17:5-10
October 19, 20, 2019
Beargrass Christian Church

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Football season is here—a favorite story is about Randy Johnson.
1. He played quarterback for Oklahoma State University and is related to our former president who had the same last name.
 2. It had not been a good year for OSU—and their final game was against their bitter rivals—the Sooners of Oklahoma.
 3. OSU played great, but they were down by 6 with seconds to go with the ball on their own 20-yard line—time for one more play.
 4. The coach put in all the seniors for the last play so they could say they ended their college football careers on the field.
 - a. He told Randy to call any play he wanted.
 - b. To the surprise of his teammates, Randy called play 13.
 - c. It was a trick play that had never been used before in a game—because it had never worked in practice.
 - d. Well, the impossible happened—play 13 worked!
 - e. OSU won, the fans went wild, Randy was carried off the field.
 5. His coach asked: “Why in the world did you call play 13?”
 - a. He said: “We were in the huddle and I looked at Harry and Ralph with tears in their eyes—it was their last game.
 - b. “I saw number 8 on Harry’s jersey and 7 on Ralph’s jersey.
 - c. “So, I added 8 and 7 together and called play 13!”
 6. His coach said: “But Randy, 8 and 7 don’t add up to 13!”
 7. Randy thought for a moment and said: “You’re right coach. But if I had been as smart as you are, we would have lost the game!”
- B. Knowledge will only take us so far.
1. There is much in this world that no one knows or understands.
 2. We are all somewhat like Albert Einstein’s wife.
 3. She was asked if she could make sense of his theories.
 4. She said she understood the words, but not the sentences.
- C. And that could describe many of us as well.
1. When it comes to making sense out of life, we often understand the words—but we don’t always understand the sentences.
 2. And the situation is getting more and more challenging.
- D. A few months ago, the chief technology officer of Microsoft U. S. was in Louisville—and she made a startling statement.
1. In the next 10 years, we will see 250 years’ worth of change!
 2. A recent analysis by IBM predicted that within a few years, the amount of knowledge in the world will double every 12 minutes.
 3. Even now, 2.5 quintillion bits of information are added every day—that is 2.5 with 18 zeros.
 4. Some knowledge may become obsolete before the next exam.
- E. Thank God we are not saved by our knowledge.

1. We are not saved by what we know, for then only the most educated among us could enter the realm of God.
2. If we were saved by knowledge, many of us would be in trouble.

II. **AND WE ARE NOT SAVED BY OUR WORKS.**

- A. This may be more difficult for us to comprehend and accept.
 1. We cannot earn our way into heaven with our good works.
 2. No sacrifice is great enough to guarantee us the favor of God.
- B. Someone pointed out that there can be “badness in goodness.”
 1. That is what can happen when we begin to believe that we are saved by our own achievements and our own hard work.
 2. So, we are also not saved by our good works, although good works are certainly an important part of our lives as Christians.

III. **WE ARE SAVED BY OUR FAITH...BY GRACE.**

- A. The tension between works and faith is described in today’s text.
 1. “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.”
 2. The words appear right before the parable of the dutiful servant.
 3. Jesus tells his friends that they don’t need more faith—they need to use the faith they have toward dedicated service to God.
- B. That said, we have to acknowledge that like last week’s story, this parable Jesus tells is also not one of our favorites.
 1. It includes no heroic figure like the Good Samaritan.
 2. It doesn’t tug at our heartstrings like the Prodigal Son story.
- C. No, this parable describes a servant who labors long hours in the field—and then is expected to fix dinner for the master.
 1. If Jesus told the parable today, he’d probably substitute “employee” for “servant,” but the point would be the same.
 2. Does your servant deserve thanks for doing what’s expected?
- D. In the parable, the implied answer is clearly “No,” and Jesus then turns the story on the disciples who are seeking more faith.
 1. “So, you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are servants; we have only done our duty.’”
 2. The mistake we often make is the assumption that faith must be of the spectacular variety in order to be valid.
 3. It is hard for us to grasp that just a little faith is all we need.

IV. **BUT SOMETIMES IT IS HARD TO HOLD ON TO IT.**

- A. A child wrote: “Dear God, are you for real? Some people don’t think so—so if you are, you’d better do something quick!”
 1. That may be the way we feel or think at times?
 2. Sometimes our faith and daily life seem to be at odds.
 3. Our profession of faith can become a depression of faith.
- B. It’s like the elderly woman who took a flight for the first time and heard an alarming announcement over the plane’s intercom.
 1. “This is your captain—our number four engine has been shut off because of mechanical trouble—but do not worry about it.
 2. “We will fly with three engines and we will land on schedule.
 3. “And I have good news for you—we have four pastors on board.

4. The woman called for a flight attendant: "Would you tell the captain that I would rather have four engines than four pastors."
- C. Garrison Keillor talked about trying to remain faithful in the face of adversity and challenges in "The Meaning of Life."
 1. He said: "'Woofing' is not the last word—good and right intentions can sometimes be muddled by 'woofing.'" (as in dogs barking)
 2. "To know and serve God is why we're here, a clear truth that, like the nose on your face, is near at hand and easily discernible, but can make us dizzy if we try to focus on it too hard."
 3. "But a little faith will see us through!"
 4. "When things go temporarily to the dogs, cats must learn to have faith that all this 'woofing' is not the last word."
 5. "What is the last word then?" he asks.
 6. "Gentleness is everywhere in daily life, a sign that faith rules through ordinary things like cooking, small talk, storytelling, sports, music and books, raising kids—all the places where the gravy soaks in—and grace shines through."

V. SO, LET'S HANG ON TO WHATEVER FAITH WE HAVE.

- A. Jesus says that only a small amount of faith is enough.
 1. It is not how much we believe—God believes in us.
 2. We are created in God's image and we are invited to follow.
- B. And I think we also have to ask about the language in the text.
 1. Early translations leave out the word "worthless" in this story and use the word "servants" instead of "slaves."
 2. William Barclay proclaims: "We are servants—but that is enough and that is the point of this parable."
 3. "In relationship to God, we are always servants."
 4. "We are to do what is expected—even if it sounds joyless."
- C. But there are some things we can say about that.
 1. When we act in faith, there will be times when someone says "Thank you" in such a heartfelt way that it buoys our spirit.
 2. In fact, it is unlikely that we can be faithful in our Christian duty without receiving occasional expressions of appreciation.
 3. Jesus just cautions us that we should serve God because it's the right thing to do—not out of a hunger for divine rewards.
 4. And doing the right thing brings a kind of satisfaction of its own—we see this happen in our relationships.
- D. Someone tells of the early days of his marriage when there was friction because he assumed that she would do the housework.
 1. But she also had a full-time job outside the home.
 2. After several confrontations, he finally decided to help out.
 3. The first thing he tackled was the kitchen; he did all the dishes, wiped the counters and swept and mopped the floor.
 - a. Then he eagerly waited for her to come home.
 - b. She did, she seemed to notice the work, but said nothing.
 - c. Finally, he could stand it no longer: "Did you see that I cleaned up the kitchen? Don't you appreciate it?"

4. She said: "I'm glad you've done the work, but we both live here and keeping it clean is just part of our responsibilities.
 5. "I've never been thanked...and I don't expect it."
 6. It took time to readjust his thinking and pride, but he "got it" and kept doing a fair share of the housecleaning.
 7. He never particularly enjoyed it, but he began to take a certain satisfaction in keeping the home reasonably clean.
- E. In a similar way, there can be a certain satisfaction in serving God—even when no thanks seems to be forthcoming.
- F. Jesus teaches us to stay away from the notion of entitlement and privilege and reminds us that we don't earn our way into God's realm.
1. It is all about grace—God's amazing graciousness to us.
 2. It also reminds us that it's not the *quantity* of our faith that matters—but putting what faith we have into service.
- G. Many of you have already discovered that kind of joy.
1. Faith enables us to do the things that Jesus wants us to do.
 2. It's not a question of increasing our faith, but of letting out the clutch and getting our faith into gear.
 3. And we have heard it said that faith without works is dead—so true faith will always lead us to greater service.
 4. Faith is a gift from God to help us make a difference in this world—even in the most difficult circumstances.
- H. There was a woman in a community who was well-known for her simple faith and great calm in the midst of many trials.
1. A newcomer to town heard about her and arranged for a visit.
 2. She was welcomed in and she asked: "So, you are the woman with the great faith I have heard so much about?"
 3. The woman said: "No. I am not the woman with great faith."
 4. "But I am the woman with a little faith in our great God."