Amos 8:4-7

Psalm 113

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13

**Sermon September 22nd, 2019**

*God Impacts People’s Lives even with the Little Gifts We Have to Offer*

Listening to the experts, the news articles, the political and religious leaders, there is one common theme we seem to agree on. We are facing some major problems in our world today. Problems that seem to be impacting more and more people. Problems that are looking insurmountable to try and solve.

We see these problems. We see these Calculus like equations. We want to help solve these problems. We want to make a difference, yet we start to get discouraged when we see how big the problems really are. When we see how difficult it is to try and solve these problems. We feel overwhelmed, and a lot of times give up, because we don’t think we have the resources, or the power, or the capabilities to be part of the solution. Instead, we back away hoping that someone else will come along and figure it out.

As a church leader, and as a member of the Interfaith Council here in Calgary I have participated in a lot of group sessions with the intentions of trying to solve some of these bigger issues. Unfortunately, many times we find it hard to move from the talking phase to the action phase, because we see how daunting the tasks are. And we doubt that we have enough resources to take action. Instead, the group ends up dissolving or never leaves the talking phase. We see the problem as too big for a few enthusiastic go getters to solve. Or we hit a few challenges along the way and get discouraged.

I’m sure the people in the early church felt this way. Jesus is inviting the disciples to be part of some major reforms in their community. Changes that will be difficult, because they don’t have any authority in the community to make these changes. They have very little resources to work with. And people don’t end up reacting very kindly to their proposals.

So, Jesus uses a controversial parable to challenge them to trust that with the little they have their impact can move mountains, because God has promised to use their gifts to do amazing things. No matter how big the gift is.

Now, I use the word controversial, because on the surface it looks like Jesus is teaching us that God commends a person for cheating his boss out of money. Many scholars over the years have struggled to understand this parable. The amount of interpretations out there is plentiful.

Well, looking ahead to verse ten where Jesus talks about having faith in the little we have. I can start to see this parable in a more sensible light. Here we have a manager who deservingly has put himself in a place where he is going to lose his job. He should have never cheated his boss out of all that money. But, who with his back against the wall, and with little left, finds a way to create a situation for himself and his boss that will have a big impact. Forgiving a part of the debts of the people who owed the master money is more than likely to lead to the people showing hospitality to the manager who will now be with out work and in need. Also, the master will benefit, because the clients will see the master in a good way, and continue to do business with the master.

Again, Jesus isn’t condoning cheating. The manager will still be fired. Jesus is using this story as an example to teach the disciples that even with the little they have their impact can be great. And also, as stated in verse 12 to make the point that the gifts God gives us will do so much more to impact this world in a positive way then all the money in the world.

This is a hopeful message for followers of Jesus who have very little possessions and money, but who have been given other gifts that impact people’s lives. If only they were as shrewd, as clever as the manager, then they could move mountains.

For example, imagine how women who were following Jesus felt when Jesus and the other male disciples were respecting and listening to them as equals. Image how they felt when Paul was assigning them to leadership roles in their communities of faith. For all you women here today, how do you feel when your faith community treats you with the same love and respect that others are treated with.

Or imagine how the people living in poverty felt when Jesus and the disciples valued them as much as they valued each other. People who were taught they didn’t matter. Or worse, that they are sinners who deserve their lot. Even if circumstances tell us otherwise. People who felt separated by God, now reconnecting through Jesus’ love and compassion. Imagine how people living in poverty felt when those in the early church continued to support and love them. Imagine how people living in poverty feel when we take time to sit down on a Saturday at the Mustard seed and listen to their story. Or acknowledge that they matter when passing them on the street.

Or imagine that child who is welcome to come and sit with Jesus in a society where children didn’t matter. Imagine the first time your child came up and received communion in a community that at times wanted children to wait till they were older to receive.

Or imagine how the Samaritan woman or the Canaanite Woman or the Syrophoenician woman or the Roman Soldier felt when Jesus took time to tend to their needs when they were seen as outcasts or worse. Imagine how Gentiles like Cornelius felt when Peter, Paul, and others welcomed them as their own. Imagine how refugees feel when we show them this same hospitality in the midst of all the suffering and rejection they have experienced.

Jesus and his followers didn’t need a lot of money or need to perform miracles all the time to impact these people and the community in major ways. We don’t need to have a lot of money or need to do something grandiose to impact people with God’s love. What we need to do is imitate Jesus, who listens, loves, and values people for who they are.

**Let us pray,** loving God, we give thanks for the gifts you give us. Open our hearts to believe that with you even the littlest things we can offer will impact your creation in unimaginable ways. **Amen.**

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