

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Psalm 37:1-9

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Luke 17:1-10

Sermon October 6th, 2019

God's Spirit Is All We Need

In our gospel this morning, Jesus is teaching the disciples how to live out their discipleship. Jesus mentions three actions specifically. First, Jesus talks about being an example for others to follow. When Jesus comes to their boats and their tax booths he invites them to invest their time and energy to follow him. Observing everything he does. Learning to do the same so that they too can be an example for others to follow.

Now that new people are wanting to become disciples, the disciples are called to mentor them. When Jesus warns the disciples to not allow one of these little ones to stumble Jesus is talking about new immature believers. Not necessarily children, which most of us probably think of when we hear these words.

Still, when we think of living by example we start to remember what it was like trying to set a good example for our children or for our friends or siblings children if we don't have children ourselves. Like, trying not to swear while watching the hockey game. Or waiting till the children fall asleep before pulling out that bag of chips or that late night bowl of ice cream. Or holding in that gas at the dinner table even if our stomach is hurting really bad, so to avoid teaching them bad manners.

Or working really hard to convince our children that parents never fight. Or getting up extra early to clean up after them so that they wake up to a clean house. Hoping this motivates them to listen when we ask them to clean their rooms. Or being kind to our neighbors even when they drive us completely bonkers, because we want our children to be kind to those around them.

Or trying to be a helpful support to our friends and siblings instead of the cool rebellious aunt or uncle that our nieces and nephews admire. Giving them free passage to say to their parents when their parents are holding them accountable for something, "why can't you be more like uncle or aunty so and so."

So, like trying to be a good example for the children in our lives or the disciples trying to be a good example for new believers, we as Christians, are invited to be a good example for others to follow.

Yet, as Jesus says, occasions for stumbling are bound to come. The first time we hear our child say that dreaded four letter word that we accidentally let slip out earlier reminds us of this warning.

Second, Jesus teaches us to forgive those who repent to us. Even if this person wrongs us seven times a day. Now this seems excessive, but if we think about it for a moment, anyone who has ever had to look after a toddler for a day knows they have probably had to confront the little person at least seven times in the first hour. What is so unique with toddlers is usually they do something wrong. We create a way to teach them that this wasn't the best thing to do. Then they apologize. Done deal. Until we have to repeat this whole pattern ten minutes later.

It isn't until we get older that we start to create ways to work around the truth in the hopes of avoiding saying "I'm sorry." Probably because it is such a ding to our pride.

Being in any kind of intimate relationship with someone leads to a lot of repentance and forgiveness for the relationship to be healthy. I've been married for eleven years and I have needed to repent or forgive a lot over that time. Usually I am doing more of the repenting.

For the disciples they are a small group of people who spend a lot of time together. It is not surprising that they would have moments of disagreement or even fighting happening among them. For the group to remain healthy they need to repent and forgive. Otherwise, their fighting may lead to division and become a threat to the mission.

For us as the church there are times where we don't get along. Where we hurt each other. When we can repent and apologize we often find that these conflicts get resolved establishing a healthy environment where we can focus on the missional goals we have set. When someone is unwilling to repent or forgive then we start to see the community break down.

Third, Jesus invites us to be in service for others always. And when we serve others with the hopes that one day we will be the ones being served. Jesus challenges us. This isn't the kingdom Jesus is proclaiming.

We see at other times during Jesus' ministry how much the disciples want to gain status from following Jesus. How much they want to be in a position where others will serve them. Kind of like working ourselves up from the mail room to the CEO's office. We often are motivated more to do things when we know we will be rewarded in some way. However, Jesus is saying our identity as followers of Jesus is to be servants so why should we be rewarded for what we are supposed to do?

So, Jesus paints a picture of how we are to live out our discipleship, and yet, we see how hard it is to live this way all the time. How often have we felt that milestone around our necks?

In response to Jesus' calls to action, the disciples ask Jesus for more faith. When we feel we cannot live up to the expectations placed on us we often look for help from somewhere. Give me more and then I will be able to help. Whether it is time or belief or money or other resources to get the job done.

In response to the disciples, to us, Jesus tells us that we don't need any more faith or anything else for that matter. We have the greatest gift of all. God's Spirit that helps us live out our discipleship. All we need to do is trust that with God anything is possible.

All we need to do is trust. I know for many of us trust is hard. We experience broken relationships. Broken promises from those we love. People who lead us astray because of unhealthy motivations. We have trouble trusting, and yet, God is saying to us trust that what I have given you is enough.

When we can let go of all the doubt and wounds, and trust in God's good graces we often see God's love do things in our lives that we thought were impossible. We often see God's love touching our lives in amazing ways.

When Jesus talks about the forgiveness we are supposed to live out, Jesus is also talking about this forgiveness as a reflection of God's forgiveness for us. So, even if we look at ourselves, and say, "I know I have the Spirit in me, but I still mess up sometimes" we can go on to say "I'm sorry" and receive the grace God has bestowed upon us. We can be lifted up and inspired to do better next time.

Jesus paints a picture for us on how to live out our discipleship. To be an example. To forgive. To repent. To be a servant to others. Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit that helps us do these things. And Jesus offers us forgiveness when we still have temporary moments of stumble. Jesus removes the milestone from our neck, and breathes new life into us. So, that like Jesus, we can impact the world in life giving ways.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks for Jesus' example. May you give us what we need so that we can live out your invitation to be your disciples. So, we can be examples of your love. So, we can repent to and forgive those we love. So, we can serve others without any motive to be served. When we fall short guide our hearts to repentance. When we receive your forgiveness make us new so that we can be freed to be your disciples in the world impacting people in life giving ways. **Amen.**

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