

Luke 17:5-19 - Lord increase our faith

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This morning as we head into to 2010 and think about the year ahead, 2009 was a testing year in many ways. 2010 promises to be a truly great year in God for all of us.

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Last year Tony Fitzgerald, a pastor and apostolic leader from Perth said; "2009 would be a year of repositioning whilst 2010 would be a year of harvest and great fruitfulness"

As I said a number of months ago, I felt this really connect with my spirit and I believe that 2010 will not only be the year of harvest where unbelievers become believers, but that I also feel that for many of us it will be a year of increase, harvesting what you have sown in the past, reaping the fruit from the years of service in God's kingdom.

For this year I want to encourage each of you, but in particular the men of this church to make plans at least one a month to take yourself somewhere where you can have a day of solitude, silence and prayer. Somewhere where you can relax, unwind and first of all, thoroughly enjoy spending time with Jesus, but also where you can hear him speak clearly.

2009 was a huge repositioning year for me personally and at my Christmas break I needed to get a day of solitude with God to recharge and hear him for this year. For me I recharge when I drive long distances and can see the ocean. It does something in my spirit. And over my break I took myself all the way down the Great Ocean Road finally ending up at Apollo Bay. It was just what the doctor ordered.

And felt that I heard one word for us for this year and that word is SURRENDER.

Now that might not strike you as very profound, but I want us to think about it a bit more deeply this morning.

I am thoroughly convinced that without this spirit of surrender our faith will be weak and that our motivation will be tainted by a "what can I get out of this" mentality.

So, what do I mean? Well let's turn to Luke 17:5-19 and work our way through a passage of scripture that has the potential to offend us if we don't understand what it means to be in surrender.

Luke 17:5-10

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

From this verse it is clear that the disciples want to learn the way of faith. They want an increase in faith. They would have seen and heard Jesus commend those who had great faith and also the times he told some of them that they had little faith.

6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

As one commentator has said the faith mentioned here is not so much the amount as it is the presence of faith, but I believe that what Jesus is trying to get across here is that even the very smallest amount of faith can do amazing things. A mustard seed is small (around 3mm in diameter) but when planted grows to become a huge plant.

Also there is a relationship between commanding and obeying. A command is given and obedience is expected, not hoped for. This sense of expectation is one of the hallmarks of faith and he now goes on to show this relationship in more detail with a story.

7 "Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'?

8 Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'?

9 Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded?

10 So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

This section has the ability to offend us if not correctly understood and I believe that in the context of Jesus teaching on faith above, the command and obey scene is repeated in a different context - one of a servant to his master. So what can we understand from this passage.

- 1) Faith is to be expected in us
Our faith is and never should be in our own faith but rather in God who answers prayers of faith and our commands of faith.
When we exhibit faith we shouldn't be surprised at the results, they should be expected because of who God is and not who we are.
- 2) Faith is a lifestyle and not an event
The servant does not expect any praise from the master for what is his duty. He

is simply doing what he must do in the master servant relationship as a lifestyle.

3) Faith is the result of complete surrender to Jesus

How many of can truly say as Jesus told his disciples to say of themselves that when we exhibit faith “we are unworthy we are only doing what was commanded of us”?

This is the area that I believe we can struggle with in this passage. That of surrender. We are wired from birth to want and expect to get our own way all the time. To be served rather than to serve, but here Jesus is showing us the correct understanding of our relationship to him, from which our faith flows freely. When we correctly understand the idea of surrender to Jesus then everything else falls into place and we can live a lifestyle of faith.

We shouldn't be praised or thanked for our surrender and obedience to God it is what should be expected of every person who has ever walked this planet, but it is the very quality that is sadly in short supply.

If as believers everything we do in his service is tainted with the slightest hint of “I deserve something for all the work I've done for you Jesus” then we have missed the point of our condition (that we deserve his judgement) and his grace (that despite our condition he gives us mercy).

We will always be unworthy servants in essence doing what is expected of us, but because of God's grace and mercy we will always be completely loved and completely cared for as his servants.

Mark 10:29-30

29 Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,
30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Finally let's look at an example that vividly shows this type of faith and the lifestyle of faith that Jesus is commending in each of us.

Luke 7:1-10

1 After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.

2 Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him.

3 When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant.

4 And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, “**He is worthy** to have you do this for him,

5 for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.”

6 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for **I am not worthy** to have you come under my roof.

7 Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed.

8 For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

9 When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.”

10 And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

If we live our lives with the self sufficiency and the sense of worthiness that Jewish elders highly regarded, we will continually fall short of everything that God has in store for us and will live a life of bondage and frustration.

But if we - like the centurion understand our relationship to God and place our complete and undivided faith in Jesus then just as his servant was healed at Jesus’ word, our lives will also continually be in a God ordained healthy place.

Let 2010 be a year where we grow in our understanding of what it means to be truly surrendered to Jesus in every area of our lives.