

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Luke 17:1-10

Year C - Proper 22, Text: Luke 17:1-10

Year C - Proper 22, Text: Luke 17:5-10

In Luke's narrative, Jesus leaves Galilee in 9:51 and enters the region of Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives in 19:29. Along the way, Jesus and His disciples have to deal with opposition. However, in 17:1-10 Luke focuses on the importance of spiritual renewal.

Verses 17:1-4: In the first four verses of Chapter 17, Jesus tells His hearers (v. 1) that although the powers of sin prevail around them, woe to those who encourage others to walk in the ways of sin. In verse 2, Jesus warns His disciples and followers never to do anything to cause their brothers and sisters to abandon the Christian journey. Better to die a violent death – to have a millstone tied around the neck and be thrown into the sea than to cause members of God's family (Jesus' "little ones") to stumble while they seek to walk in Jesus' steps.

A basalt millstone, common in the Palestine of Jesus' day, weighed hundreds of pounds. According to verse 3, if a fellow believer falls into sin, they are to rebuke that person and then forgive him or her. And in verse 4, even if that person sins against them seven times each day and asks for forgiveness seven times each day, the disciples are to forgive that person seven times each day.

Verses 17:5-6: The apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith. Jesus responds that what they need more than anything else is an ever-deepening faith in Jesus' Father. He can and will rescue them from opposing powers. If the disciples have a faith the size of a mustard seed, they will be empowered to achieve remarkable things.

A mulberry tree is a rather large tree with an extensive root system. It would be difficult to tear such a tree out of the ground and then throw it into deep water. However, faith in Jesus' Father empowers God's people to achieve remarkable things. The words they speak in the name of Jesus will go forth to achieve the thrust of their content.

Verses 17:7-10: If a person has a slave and that slave is entrusted with the task of caring for his master's sheep, the slave cannot expect special treatment at the end of the day. He cannot expect to be invited to share table with his master and dine with him. If anything, he must expect to be told to prepare a meal for his master and serve it to him. And only after the master has finished eating can the slave feed himself.

A slave cannot expect to be thanked merely for doing his duty. So too, Jesus' disciples are called to carry out a responsible ministry. And when they carry out that ministry, they cannot expect any special reward for doing so. They are to understand life as merely doing what Jesus commands them to do.

In like manner, we are never to think that we deserve any special treatment or favor from God. In following Jesus in dedicated servanthood, we are merely doing what Jesus calls us to do. Discipleship is not about seeking rewards for services rendered; it is about responding to God's grace and goodness. It is not about striving to be accepted by God; rather, it is about responding to having been accepted by God. It is about living as God first intended humanity to live. It is about seeking to live this side of heaven as we shall when we enter heaven.

