

REDISCOVER JESUS, PART 63: “OUR HONORABLE DUTY”
LUKE 7:1-10
Ps. Eric Yee

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 63 of our sermon series called “Rediscover Jesus,” where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

So let's get right into today's sermon: “Our Honorable Duty.”

Sermon Introduction

Desmond Doss was a follower of Christ who served as a US army medic during World War II.

In May of 1945, during the Battle of Okinawa, he was part of a group of soldiers who were ordered to take a 400-foot cliff called “Hacksaw Ridge.” But the Japanese forces ambushed them and there were heavy casualties.

As a medic, Doss didn't flee, but he stayed under constant enemy fire to save the lives of an estimated 75 wounded soldiers. He was wounded four times as he carried them one by one to the edge of the cliff, lowering them safely down on a rope-supported litter.

Doss prayed, “Lord, please help me get one more,” and when he did, he prayed again, “Lord, please help me get one more.” He did this until he was too wounded to get any more and he himself needed to be lowered down the cliff.

Doss received the Medal of Honor, which is the highest military honor in the US, but in response, he said that he felt that he was only keeping the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12, which is to do unto others what you would have them do unto you.

As a medic, Doss understood that he had a serious responsibility to others, he prayed that God would empower him to live out his duty to save lives, and *even when* he was awarded the highest military honor for his deeds, he saw it as simply doing his duty not only as a medic but especially as a follower of Christ.

As a servant of the Lord, Desmond Doss was a man who understood something about honorable duty. And that's what we're going to look at more today.

The One Thing

***As unworthy servants, our honorable duty is to
help one another serve our worthy Lord.***

Scripture Introduction

Turn your Bibles to Luke 17:1-10.

The passage we're looking at today ends a section that has been going on since the beginning of Luke chapter 15, where he's been challenging and instructing the religious teachers of his day and his own disciples.

The point of the last parable Jesus told his disciples was that they ought to live this life for the sake of seeking the repentance and salvation of more lost people for heaven (Luke 16:1-13).

And the point of the last parable that he told to the religious teachers was that how one responds to God's Word in this temporary life will decide how one spends eternity in the afterlife, specifically emphasizing the eternal torments of hell for unrepentant sinners (Luke 16:19-31).

And that's where we are in today's passage, as Jesus now turns back to speak to his disciples.

Scripture Reading

Let's read Luke 17:1-10.

¹ And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! ² It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. ³ Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ⁴ and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our 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."

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 is God's Word.

Overview

From this passage, we'll see the "what," "how," and "why" of our role as servants of the Lord:

I. The What: We have a serious responsibility to one another (vv.1-4)

II. The How: We have the faith needed to obey (vv. 5-6)

III. The Why: We are unworthy servants merely doing our duty (vv.7-10)

So as servants of the Lord, *what* are we supposed to do, *how* are we able to do it, and *why* should we do it? That's what we'll unpack today.

Keep your Bibles open to this passage in Luke chapter 17, as I'll be calling our attention to specific verses throughout.

Now first, let's get into the...

I. The What: We have a serious responsibility to one another (vv.1-4)

Look at verses 1-2.

[¹ And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! ² It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.]

As Christians, until the day we die, there will always be temptations to sin, but “woe to the one through whom they come!”

Miserable consequences await those who tempt others to sin.

A “millstone” was a round stone used for grinding grain, and it weighed hundreds of pounds. So if you had a millstone tied around your neck and were thrown into the sea, you were going to die a horrific, gruesome death by drowning.

So Jesus is giving a *serious warning* here, saying that it would be *better* to go through *that* kind of mafia-style drowning than to cause people to stumble. The word for “temptations to sin” is literally “stumbling blocks.” The point is very simple: Don’t be a stumbling block for others. Don’t cause people to sin. Don’t lead people to turn away from Christ.

Remember the context. Jesus is coming right off of talking about the eternal torments of hell and the larger context of how we should actively seek the repentance and salvation of the lost.

So Jesus has eternal consequences in mind for what he’s saying here.

In essence, Jesus is communicating that being his disciple means that you’re not just thinking about yourself, but you’re also thinking about *other* people’s followership of Christ. You’re thinking about other people’s salvation and *their* persevering to the end.

In 1 Corinthians 8, some Christians were being stumbled by other Christians who were eating meat that was previously sacrificed to idols. And even though Paul acknowledges that there is only one God and this meat is just meat, *because* he doesn’t want to be a stumbling block to others, he says, “if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1 Cor. 8:13). And just like that, Paul who had been eating meat his whole life is willing to become a vegetarian.

That’s the extent that he was willing to go in order not to be a stumbling block to his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Why? Because it would be better to be drowned to death than to be a stumbling block to others in their followership of Christ.

We have a *serious* responsibility to one another. There is no such thing as *merely* a private, individual relationship with God, but your relationship with God is intimately tied to other believers’ relationship with God. We are to serve the Lord by *helping* one another to serve him. We are not to be stumbling blocks to one another, but we are to do everything we can to help each other be preserved in the faith to the end.

<pause>

[³ Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,]

So verse 3 says, “Pay attention to yourselves!” Be watchful that you *yourself* do not stumble into sin and be watchful that you do not lead *others* to stumble into sin.

If you’re a Christian, you wear the name of Christ. In your baptism, you publicly identified with him, and he publicly identified with you. And so, everything you say and do now either draws people closer *towards* Christ or draws people farther *away* from him.

Think to yourself: What about your life, if it were discovered, would stumble others? What are some things in your life right now that you’ve convinced yourself is ok, but you know that if others found out, it would stumble them—it would move them farther away from Christ?

- Maybe it’s mistreating your classmate because everyone else is doing it.
- Maybe it’s cheating on an exam or going along with others to do something unethical at work.

- Maybe it's your occasional tipsiness that you've convinced yourself is not drunkenness.
- Maybe it's the ways you've told half-truths to deceive people into thinking more highly of you.
- Maybe it's the harsh tone or sarcastic ways you belittle others in your workplace or in your family.
- Maybe it's the sexual sins that you've allowed yourself to indulge in private.

Whatever it may be, hear Jesus' words here: "Pay attention to yourselves!"

<pause>

Verse 3 then continues, saying, "If you brother sins, rebuke him."

Here, we see that it's *not* enough to simply *not* be a stumbling block to others. It's not enough to say to yourself, as long as *I'm* not stumbling into sin or as long as I'm stumbling *anyone else*, then I'm ok. No, Jesus says that, as a spiritual family, we have the responsibility of *loving* our brother or sister in sin by *rebuking* them and seeking their *repentance*.

I know that this is very unnatural for most of us. If we're honest with ourselves, the reason some of us don't rebuke our fellow brother or sister in sin is because we love *ourselves* more than we love *them*. It's more comfortable and much easier to just turn a blind eye to one another's sins—and perhaps some of us have even convinced ourselves that somehow we're being loving by *ignoring* their sins. But that's a lie. That's the most unloving thing we can do amidst our brother or sister living in sin.

But Proverbs 27:5-6 says: "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy."

We shouldn't wait *passively* for our brother to repent of his sins, or for someone else to rebuke him. But the expectation that Jesus has of his disciples is that of *initiative*: if their brother sins, they *will* rebuke him.

Now, we should expect these conversations to be hard.

When I know that I need to rebuke someone living in sin, my heart starts beating faster, my palms get sweaty, and my voice gets shaky. I'm scared of how the person might respond and how it would impact our friendship.

And even when I get the words out of my mouth, it's sometimes met with defensiveness, justifications, and sometimes even turning the tables back on me: "It's because of this and that. I couldn't help myself. God will understand. Nobody else thought there was anything wrong with it. Others agree with me. How could you think that?"

And when I'm met with those responses, it's easy to think to myself, "Ok fine. Forget it. I tried, but if this is how the person is going to respond, I'm never going to try again."

I know what it feels like to be the lone voice of conscience in a person's life and it's really discouraging. I know what it feels like to have the tables turned on me, and it's really painful. And everything in me wants to just drop it and move on—and I'm sure that's what *they* would want too—but I *can't* because I have a responsibility to them as a fellow brother or sister in Christ.

I ultimately don't stand before *them* on the final day, but I stand before *Christ* and I want to be able to stand with a clear conscience, knowing that I did everything I could to help my brother or sister turn away from sin and turn towards him in faith.

<pause>

On the other hand, when *we* are the ones being rebuked, we should make it *easy* for people to do so. If your brother or sister rebukes you for sin that they perceive in your life...

- Thank them for loving you enough and being courageous enough to say these hard things to you.

- Don't jump to explaining yourself but ask clarifying questions and verbalize what you hear them saying, so that they know that you're listening and are trying to understand.
- Take responsibility and apologize for your own specific words and actions.
- And begin to brainstorm what might be helpful next steps to move forward in your followership of Christ.

Essentially, we need to shut off our inner lawyer that feels like we need to justify yourself; that was the attitude of the Pharisees, even when Jesus himself was rebuking them. Rather, we ought to adopt an attitude of repentance, where we trust that we are already justified in Christ, and therefore we can listen to understand, own up to our sin, and ask God and others for forgiveness.

Now what would it be like if *all* of us responded to rebuke in that kind of way?

I'd imagine that we would become more and more like the church we see in Ephesians, where, by speaking the truth in love, we grow up in every way into Christ the head and we as the whole body of Christ build each other up in love (Eph. 4:15-16).

<pause>

Look again at verse 3: "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he *repents*, *forgive* him."

Jesus makes it clear that our responsibility isn't just to *rebuke* but especially to *forgive*, but in order for there to be forgiveness, there must be *repentance*.

Here, it might be helpful to distinguish between a forgiving *disposition*—or having a posture of *readiness* and *willingness* to forgive—and forgiveness itself.

Think of the father of the prodigal son in Luke 15. He was constantly watching and waiting for his son to turn back, ready to embrace him if he saw him coming home. That's a forgiving *disposition*.

But it wasn't until the son actually *repented*—turning away from his life of sin—and came home that the father was able to embrace his son. That's *forgiveness*.

Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, *just as in Christ God forgave you*" (NIV).

So we are called to forgive each other the way that God has forgiven us. How does God forgive us? There is a *condition* for his forgiveness. He doesn't just automatically forgive everyone in the world, but repentance is required.

So in the case of forgiving one another, as followers of Christ, we should all have a forgiving *disposition* because we've been forgiven by God, but if there's no *repentance* by the one who is being rebuked for sin, then *forgiveness* can't really take place.

And again, for those who are not yet repentant, our posture is *not* one of holding grudges or bitterness in our hearts, but like the father of the prodigal son, our posture is one that is ready and willing to forgive. Our hearts remain *open* rather than *closed*. Our hearts remain *inviting* rather than *avoiding*. We maintain a forgiving *disposition* even when *repentance* has not yet occurred.

But if repentance *does* take place, then forgiveness *must* take place as well. It doesn't mean it's going to be quick and easy. It might be very difficult—and both parties need to understand that—but there's never a place for a Christian to say in their hearts, "I refuse to forgive this person, period," for Jesus taught us to pray, "forgive us our debts, *as we also have forgiven our debtors*" (Matt. 6:12; cf. Luke 11:4).

Quacking doesn't make you a duck, but ducks *do* quack. In the same way, forgiving others doesn't make you a Christian, but Christians *do* forgive.

As those who have been forgiven greater debts against God, we should always have a forgiving *disposition* towards anyone who has far smaller debts against us. And if they come to that realization and turn in

repentance, then we should rejoice with all of heaven at their repentance and share in God's joy of forgiving our brother or sister.

<pause>

[³ Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ⁴ and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."]

And look at verse 4. As disciples, we're called to *repeatedly* forgive as our brother *repeatedly* sins against us and *repeatedly* repents. "Seven" is not our literal daily limit for forgiveness, but it is symbolic for an *limitless* amount of times a day.

As long as there is repentance, we *must* forgive.

Now, to be clear, repentance is not simply saying the magical words, "I repent," but repentance is grief and hatred of our sin, turning away from it and turning towards God in faith, with the resolve and purpose of obedience to him.

And what he's saying here is that our *default* should be one of having a forgiving *disposition*. If they're repentant, then *forgiveness* must occur.

<pause>

So first, as servants of the Lord, what are we supposed to do? We have a serious responsibility to one another, and we're to do everything we can to help our brother or sister in their followership of Christ.

Second, how are we be able to do that? That's what we'll look at next in...

II. The How: We have the faith needed to obey (vv. 5-6)

Look at verse 5.

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

Essentially, after hearing Jesus' commands to pay attention to themselves in order to *not* be a stumbling block, to rebuke their brothers in sin, and to forgive them repeatedly—as many times as they repent—they don't think they can do it.

But why do they cry out to Jesus ("the Lord") to increase their *faith*? What's faith have to do with obedience? Everything!

Obedience requires faith because obeying is hard. People sin—whether by commission or omission—because it's pleasurable and comfortable. So it's *easy* to sin but it's *hard* to obey.

The apostles understand that to obey in the ways that Jesus just commanded will be painful.

- It will be painful to put restrictions on their lives for the sake of others' followership of Christ.
- It will be painful to initiate an uncomfortable conversation with a brother in sin to rebuke him and seek his repentance.
- It will be painful to repeatedly forgive those who repeatedly sin and repeatedly repent.

So in order to obey, they have to *really* believe that enduring the pain of obedience is worthwhile. They have to *really* believe that what Jesus commands is good and right and best and has eternal consequences. Otherwise, there's no way they would be able to do it—let alone even *want* to do it.

So in order to obey what he commands, they cry out to Jesus, "Increase our faith!"

<pause>

Now look at verse 6.

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.

The “mustard seed” was among the smallest seeds in Palestine. In contrast, the “mulberry tree” had an extensive, intricate root system that the rabbis said would take 600 years to untangle. So to uproot a mulberry tree and have it thrown in the sea was another way of saying, “It’s impossible.”

But what is impossible with men is possible with God (Luke 18:27).

The context is that the apostles are crying out to the *Lord* for help because they already know that they don’t have it within themselves to obey his commands. Jesus is *not* giving them a pep talk, telling them, “You can do it! I believe in you!” Rather, he’s saying, “You can’t do it! But believe in God! The presence of *little* faith in a *big* God is what enables the impossible to happen.”

And what is the *impossible* here? It’s the ability to obey our serious responsibility to one another in our followership of Christ—to pay attention to ourselves, rebuke those in sin, and forgive others when they repent.

None of us can do this, but God can uproot our old nature and implant in us a new nature. God can transform us from the inside out, so that we *can* and *want* to obey his commands. If we have faith in Christ as he is offered to us in the gospel, then we become a *new* creation. It doesn’t matter how *much* faith we have, but if we have *any* genuine faith at all—no matter how small or how weak—we are now *empowered* to do what we could *not* do before.

The effectiveness of our faith is not about how *much* is our *faith* but about how *big* is our *God* in whom we trust.

<pause>

To be clear, this is *not* faith to do whatever we want, but this is faith to do what Christ has commanded; it’s faith to *obey*.

And when we look at the rest of the New Testament, that’s exactly how the disciples understood what Jesus was saying here. The apostles didn’t express their faith by going around yelling at mulberry trees to be dropped into the sea, but they expressed their faith by exercising an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other. They lived out their faith by loving one another in this profound and supernatural way.

<pause>

Now, if you’re *not* a believer in Jesus Christ, you should know that there are two common misunderstandings of the gospel that have led many people astray. And even if you *are* a believer in Jesus Christ, I think we can sometimes slip into these misunderstandings if we’re not careful, especially when we come to a passage like this that talks about obeying God’s commands.

The first misunderstanding is that “I am saved by my obedience.” That’s *not* the gospel. The gospel is that *none* of us is righteous and *none* of us have obeyed the perfect standard of God’s holiness, and therefore all of us deserve just punishment for our sins; but Christ came to be our substitute—to live a life of perfect obedience in our place and die the penalty we deserved for our disobedience—so that all who repent of their sins and believe in him as Lord and Savior are saved *not* by our *own* obedience but by *his* perfect obedience on our behalf. We cannot do anything to be saved, but salvation is a free gift that we could never earn and it’s all by God’s grace.

The second misunderstanding is that, “if I’m saved by God’s grace and not by my own good works, then I don’t need to obey.” That’s also *not* the gospel. Ephesians 2:8-9 is clear that the gift of salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone; it is *not* a result of our own good works. We are *not* saved by *our*

obedience, but by the perfect obedience of *Christ* credited to us through *faith*. Ephesians 2:10 is also equally clear that we are created in Christ Jesus *for good works*—for obedience.

And that's what Jesus is talking about here in Luke 17.

When Jesus' disciples feel that they don't have enough faith to obey, Jesus reassures them that the grace that God provides not only gives them faith to be *saved* but also faith to *obey*.

So even as we're talking about obeying Jesus' commands here in Luke 17, we want to be careful to avoid these two misunderstandings of the gospel that many have stumbled into.

We need to be clear that our obedience to Christ is not *for* our salvation, but it's about *working out* (Phil. 2:12) or *living out* our salvation. And we also need to be clear that grace does not *exempt* obedience, but grace *empowers* obedience.

<pause>

[⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our 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.]

But for the apostles, at least in this moment, they feel that they need *more* faith to obey what Jesus has commanded.

Perhaps many of us can relate. Oftentimes, we think the problem is a matter of "more" or not having enough. If only I had more time, more experience, more resources, more faith, *then* I could do what God is commanding me to do.

But what Jesus says here is meant to be very encouraging. In essence, he says, "You don't need *more* faith; you just need the *presence* of faith in the Lord. It's not the *amount* of faith but the *presence* of genuine faith in who Christ is."

<pause>

There will be times when God calls us to do what seems daunting, scary, or even impossible. Perhaps it's to have a difficult conversation with someone you care about. Perhaps you're afraid of experiencing backlash from your parents, or losing your job, or ruining a friendship. And in those moments, it may feel like you need *more* faith to do what God is commanding you to do.

But here, Christ wants us to remember that perhaps it isn't that we need *more* faith, but it's that we need to *remember* and *apply* the faith that we already have.

Remember your *adoption*, that God does not leave you as a spiritual orphan to fend for yourself, but your heavenly Father provides, protects, and guides you as his beloved son or daughter, now and forever. Therefore, you can be secure no matter how much criticism or rejection you may face because you are never alone, but you forever belong in the family of God.

Remember your *sanctification*, that the Holy Spirit is committed to conforming you more and more into the likeness of Christ, and everything you go through now is to bring to completion that good work he's started in you. Therefore, you know that you're not a victim to your circumstances, but God is sovereignly ordaining them for your good and his glory.

Remember your *glorification*, that this life is not all there is, but we live for and long for Christ to return, so that we may enjoy him forever, where there will be no more sin, tears, pain, or death. Therefore, whatever temporary pain you endure in this life will pale in comparison to the eternal comforts that await you in your heavenly home.

As believers in Jesus Christ, *these* are the glorious gospel truths that *already* belong to us who believe.

How would our insecurities and fears diminish as we *remembered* what we already believe? What would obedience look like if we *applied* the faith that we already have?

It's only when we press into the faith that we already have in Christ that we'll be able to express the supernatural love for one another that Christ calls us to express.

<pause>

So how can we do that? How do we press into the faith that we have in Christ? How can we cultivate this kind of relationship with Christ where our faith in him is not just conceptual but personal?

God's Word says that apart from Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:5). There is no way that we will be able to muster this kind of supernatural love for one another unless we are abiding in the supernatural source of Christ.

The fountain of living water is always gushing forth, and he invites us, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters" (Isa. 55:1).

The way we're able to regularly *serve* others is by regularly *being served* by Christ. The way we're able to regularly *give* to others is by regularly *receiving* from Christ. We cannot give unless we've first received. Pouring *out* to others is only a natural result of first being poured *into*.

So throughout your day and week, are you regularly coming to him for a drink?

Receive from him through his Word. Receive from him from corporate worship with his people. Receive from him by simply asking of him in prayer.

Christ means his words here to be an encouragement. You are not lacking anything in him. He who began a good work in you will surely bring it to completion. He *will* more and more empower you to live out your faith in him. He *will* more and more enable you to love your brothers and sisters the way that he does.

And in so doing, all people will know that we are his disciples—not to our own praise, but to the praise of our glorious God who graciously provides us with the faith we need to both believe and obey.

<pause>

So first, as servants of the Lord, what are we supposed to do? We have a serious responsibility to one another, and we're to do everything we can to help our brother or sister in their followership of Christ.

Second, how are we be able to do that? The grace that God provides not only gives us faith to be *saved* but also faith to *obey*.

And third, why should we obey at all? That's what we'll look at next in...

III. The Why: We are unworthy servants merely doing our duty (vv. 7-10)

Look at verses 7-9.

[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?]

Here, Jesus essentially tells another parable in the form of three rhetorical questions, where the expected responses are "No," "Yes," and "No."

No—no master would invite their servant to eat with them after they had worked hard outside all day.

Yes—the master will ask the servant to prepare supper for him, “and dress properly” (which literally means “and gird yourself” [with an apron or towel, in preparation for service]), and serve him while he eats and drinks, and then *afterwards*, the servant will be permitted to eat and drink.

No—the servant should not expect to be thanked for doing what the master commanded him to do.

Now, Jesus is *not* encouraging us to be ungrateful and rude to others. Remember, parables are not all-inclusive, but there’s a particular point that Jesus is making.

Verse 10 says this:

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.’”

So Jesus’ point is not so much about the *master* as it is about the *servant*. The example to imitate is *not* the master here, but the *servant*.

Jesus’ disciples are servants of God who should *not* feel like they are doing anything *extra*, or that God owes them anything, for simply doing what was commanded of them.

Remember the context.

- In verses 1-4, Jesus says that his disciples must have profound care and concern for their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, especially in regard to avoiding sin, rebuking sin, and forgiving sin.
- In verses 5-6, the disciples cry out, “Oh my goodness, how are we going to be able to do that? That’s so hard.” And Jesus says, “The same grace that has provided you faith to *believe* in me has also provided you faith to *obey* me. It’s not the *amount* of faith but the *presence* of faith in me that empowers you to do what I’ve just commanded you.”

And Jesus’ point *here* in verses 7-10 is: “All of that is *not* super Christianity. That’s *normal* Christianity. You’re not doing anything *extra*, but simply what is *expected* of all Christians.”

Perhaps some of us have separate categories of “Christian” in our minds—KTP Christian, lukewarm Christian, regular Christian, passionate Christian, devout Christian.

But no such distinctions seem to exist in the mind of Christ. In his mind, you’re either his disciple or you’re not. In heaven, you’re either a Christian or you’re not. There are no tiers of expectations for regular Christians vs. devout Christians. But the expectations are the same for anyone who considers themselves a Christian.

We all have a serious responsibility to one another and Christ has indeed given us the faith to obey; therefore, it is right for him to expect us to obey.

Obedience to Christ is not something *extra* that differentiates “devout Christians” from “regular Christians.” No, obedience to Christ is the expectation of *every* Christian. We are servants of the Lord and it is our duty to do what he commands, knowing that he graciously provides us with the faith need to obey him.

<pause>

At the same time, we should notice that Jesus doesn’t place this expectation on any *one* disciple, but he called them to live this out together collectively as “we.”

If we are called to “rejoice with those who rejoice” and “weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15), the assumption is that not everyone will be doing well at the same time. If there are those who are grieving and weeping, they need to be cared for and loved on—not expected to just leave all that at home and just continue to serve and give of themselves.

So it's not that, if you're a Christian, then you can never struggle, but you need to be "on" 24/7 and you always need to serve, serve, serve, give, give give. No, our serious responsibility to one another does not fall all on you—nor does it fall all on just the elders and deacons, or on just the life group leaders and ministry team leaders. No, our responsibility to one another must be carried out *collectively* by the *congregation*, by *all* the members of the church.

None of us can serve each other perfectly or 24/7. We all go through seasons of suffering and struggles. That means that we cannot rely on just one or two people to help us to follow Jesus. And you cannot try to *be* that *one* person for everyone. The responsibility is too much for any one person to carry. And people who either *expect* or *attempt* to be the one or two people to carry all that will find themselves soon crushed by the weight of it. If that's ever been you, then you know that path only leads toward disappointment, exhaustion, bitterness, or burn out.

Remember, Jesus calls us *collectively* as a whole church to say, "we are unworthy servants; we have only done what was *our* duty." It's a community, church-wide effort to serve the Lord and to help each other serve the Lord.

<pause>

I want us to think for a moment about the honor we have in our duty to one another.

Think of the 343 New York City firefighters who gave their lives on September 11, 2001, in the line of duty as they rescued countless lives from collapsing buildings. Was their duty to save lives not honorable?

Or think of other civil servants like schoolteachers, police officers, military personnel, social workers, or court judges. I know that these roles are often marred by the hearts of sinful men and women, but when civil servants carry out their responsibilities with justice, truth, and kindness, their service is undoubtedly honorable as it builds up the privileges and protects the rights of the citizens.

That's the kind of honor that Christ bestows in our duty to one another.

- Like firefighters on 9/11, we give our lives in the line of duty to save countless lives for heaven.
- Like civil servants, it is our honorable duty to serve our fellow citizens in the kingdom of God.

I want us to recapture the beauty and honor we have in obeying Jesus' commands. It's not just obedience for the sake of obedience, but we have the great honor and privilege to be part of the salvation and sanctification of others.

<pause>

Now, is it wrong to be motivated by duty? Think about that for a second.

Perhaps many in our day would say, "Yes, being motivated by duty is wrong." Especially in the last few decades, it seems that "duty" is seen more and more as negative and something to avoid—that doing anything out of "duty" is somehow disingenuous, contrived, or inauthentic.

But Jesus' answer here seems to be "No, being motivated by duty is *not* wrong," because duty to obey is always better than disobedience.

Still, duty is only a *base* motivation; it's not the *highest* motivation. Duty is the motivation we have when all other motivations are not there.

For example, think of marriage vows. Vows are essentially about duty. You make marriage vows because you know you won't always feel like doing what you're vowing to do. Vows are there so that when the feelings aren't there, you are still going to do what you vowed to do.

Nobody wants to be in a marriage—or any relationship for that matter—where you only do the right thing when you feel like it. "Only be committed to me when you feel like it." Nobody wants to be in a relationship like that.

At the same time, nobody wants to be in a relationship where everything is a matter of duty. But duty is there when the feelings are not. Feelings will lag, and duty will help you during those humps. And as you keep showing up and keep doing what it right, feelings will eventually catch up and you'll find that duty begins to become engulfed in the higher motivation of *desire*, where it's not just about doing the right things but *wanting* to do those things. It's not just about spending time together, but *wanting* to spend time together. *Desire* is the aim, but the foundation and building blocks for that begin with *duty*.

Likewise, think of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In baptism, we publicly *make* covenant vows with the Lord, and in the Lord's Supper, we publicly *renew* those covenant vows with him as a whole church.

And one of those vows that we make at baptism and continue to renew in the Lord's Supper is "I commit, by God's grace, to follow Jesus forever as his disciple in the fellowship of his church."

What is that vow about? It's about duty. It's saying, "Even when I don't feel like it, even when conditions are not ideal, I'm going to continue to be part of the fellowship of Christ's church. I vow to live the Christian life with fellow believers as a meaningful member of a local church. I commit to fighting sin in my own life, to helping my brothers and sisters to fight sin, and to having a forgiving disposition towards one another. This is non-negotiable."

Why do we make these vows? Why do we enter into covenants? Because God knows our sinful hearts, and he knows that we will not always feel like doing what we know we ought to do. So when our sinful flesh, Satan's schemes, the deceit of the world, and just unideal circumstances all work against us, we go back to our baseline motivation of duty: "I made vows to my Lord in baptism. I've renewed those vows to him in the Lord's Supper. I've covenanted with my brothers and sisters in Christ here through membership. This isn't anything extra that I'm doing, but I'm simply keeping the vows that I have made."

<pause>

And how about that phrase "We are unworthy servants." How do you feel when you hear that? Is that your conception of yourself?

How a servant thinks about himself and his duty depends on who his *master* is. In this case, the duty is honorable not because of the task itself, but it's honorable because of who it is done for.

I would imagine that the driver of the President of Indonesia would be more likely to think of himself as "unworthy" than the taxi driver of a random person off the street. It's the same task of driving a person around, but what makes it more or less of a privilege or more or less honorable in the eyes of the driver is *who* he is driving.

And for the Christian, our Master is far greater than all the presidents, prime ministers, and kings of this world. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He was and is and always will be. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the great I Am, the Lion of Judah. Yet he is also the Lamb who was slain to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Conclusion

In fact, the Master that we serve is not *at all* like the master that Jesus talks about in his parable. The Master that *we* serve is the Master that *serves us*.

On the night before he was crucified, Jesus, the Master, got up from the table and put a towel around his waist and began washing his disciples' feet (John 13). And the very next day, he went to the cross to take the full punishment that we deserved for our sins. And on the final day when he returns, Jesus said this earlier in...

Luke 12:37 = Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, **he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.**

Jesus is far greater than all the masters of this world. He is the Master who gave his life to serve his servants, and he calls his servants to follow him by doing likewise. And it's our privilege, our joy, and our honor to serve him in that way.

It may begin with an honorable sense of *duty*, but as we continue to fix our eyes on who our Master is, what he has done, and what he has promised us, the Christian life becomes more and more about *desire*.

- We *desire* to serve the One who has served us.
- We *desire* to help one another to serve him.
- We *desire* the world to know that he is the Lord worthy of such service.

So once again, the one thing is this...

The One Thing

As unworthy servants, our honorable duty is to help one another serve our worthy Lord.

Let's pray.