

Leading up to this Sunday's Gospel are verses 1-4 which speak of being very careful of leading others into sin (woe to the person through whom they occur) and the importance of forgiving others of their sins (be on your guard).

Luke 17:1-4

- 1 He said to his disciples, "Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the person through whom they occur.
- 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.
- 3 Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.
- 4 And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, 'I am sorry,' you should forgive him."

This is when the apostles asked Jesus to "increase our faith".

Luke 17:5-10

- 5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."
- 6 The Lord replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to (this) mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.
- 7 "Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'?
- 8 Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'?
- 9 Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded?
- 10 So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

New Jerusalem Commentary:

Verse 5 *Disciples should not lead other people away from God. They should also be ready to forgive. This is not easy. It means that the *disciples need God's help. They realised this. So, they asked God to help them. They needed stronger *faith in God's power.

Verse 6 It seems impossible to do some things. But Jesus showed that even very little *faith in God makes things possible.

Verses 7-9 At the end of a day's work, a servant serves the master. The servant just does his duty. The master does not thank him.

Verse 10 There is no place for *spiritual *pride. A *disciple cannot expect God to be grateful to him. A *disciple may give his best service to God. However, that is no more than his duty.

On page 56 of the Magnificat, Pope Benedict comments on this Gospel passage. He says "In order to comply with the apostles' request, "Increase our faith," the Lord begins by correcting their conception of it. Faith increases in those who are truly humble – who acknowledge that, before the Lord, they ever remain "unprofitable servants."

Faith increases when we are willing to bear our "share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God."

During the homily of Mrs. Cecelia Naman's Funeral Mass, Fr. Bry Shields spoke of her service to the Lord in raising her family, involvement in church and civic activities, and in the suffering in her last few weeks of life. With her faith she had yoked herself to Christ and during her final days she had peace and was ready to meet God.

Matthew 11:28-30 reads "***Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.***"

Fr. Shields said we all need to yoke ourselves to Christ (he said the origin of the word yoke comes from the word join).

I believe that in order for us to yoke ourselves with Christ we must surrender to Him. St Paul said "***it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me***" (Gal 2-20). Mother Teresa surrendered herself and became the premier example of a servant of the Lord during our life time. I was watching a program on EWTN and they were speaking of Mother Teresa serving the poorest of the poor and how she did this with love and joy and even had a good sense of humor which was not well known. Mother Teresa, a humble and faithful servant of the Lord said "Life is passing us by... we serve God now. In heaven God puts on his apron and serves us."

Look at the last line of this gospel. I think it teaches us that works alone cannot save us, we are unprofitable servants. But, maybe a lack of works could hinder our salvation. Have we done what we were obliged to do? James 2-17 tells us that faith without works is dead. We all need the Lord to increase our faith. We are all striving to be humble and faithful servants so one day we may hear our Savior say "***Well done, my good and faithful servant. Come, Share your Master's joy***". (Mat 25:21)

Taken from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible

(I have edited/changed some wording of M. Henry's text, hopefully without error)

v. 5. The increase of our faith is what we should earnestly desire, and we should offer up that desire to God in prayer. Faith in God's pardoning mercy will enable us to get over the greatest difficulties that lie in the way of our forgiving our brother. (**v. 6**): "*If you had faith the size of mustard-seed, nothing would be too hard for you, if it were fit to be done for the glory of God.*

(**v.7, 8**)Whatever we do in the service of Christ, we must be very humble, and not imagine that we can merit any favor at his hand, or claim it as a debt. We are all *God's servants* and are bound to do all we can for his honor. Our whole strength and our whole time are to be employed for him. Let us be careful to finish our work, and to do it well, and then the reward will come in due time. Christ's servants, when they are to wait upon him, must free themselves from everything that is entangling and encumbering to attend him. Christ was *among his disciples as one that served*, and came not, as other masters, to take state, and *to be ministered unto, but to minister*. We expect God's favor, not because we have by our services made him a debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a debtor to his own honor. Though we should *do what we are commanded*, in many ways we fall short, but we are bound by that first and great commandment of *loving God with all our heart and soul*.