

The first reading comes from Saint Shahoul or Paul's. Second letter to Timothy, beginning in verse one from Shahoo. An emissary or disciple of the Messiah yeshua. By God's will, which holds forth a promise of life through being united with yeshua, Messiah. To Timothy, my dear son, grace, mercy and shalom from God the Father and the Messiah. Yeshua. Our Lord. I give thanks to God, whom, like my forebears, I worship with a clean conscience. As I regularly remember you in my prayers night and day, I am reminded of your tears and I long to see you so that I might be filled with joy. I recall your sincere trust or faith, the same trust that your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice had first. And I'm convinced that you, too now have this faith. For this reason, I'm reminded you to fan the flame of God's gift which you received through the Shamika, the covenant from me. For God gave us a spirit, a ruach, who produces not timidity, but power, love and self discipline. So don't be ashamed of bearing testimony to our Lord or to me, his prisoner. On the contrary, accept your share in suffering disgrace for the sake of the Good News.

God will give you the strength for it. Since he delivered us and called us to life of holiness as his people, it was not because of our deeds, but because of his own purpose and the grace which he gave to us who are united with the Messiah. Yeshua, he did this before the beginning of time, but made it public only now through the appearing of our deliverer. The Messiah? Yeshua. Who abolish death, and through the Good News reveal life and immortality. It was for this Good News that I was appointed a proclaimer, an emissary or disciple and teacher of the Goyam, which means us. And this is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed because I know in whom I have put my trust. And I am persuaded that he can keep safe until that day what he has entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of sound teachings you have heard from me and trust and love which is yours in the Mashiac. Yeshua, keep safe the great treasure that has been entrusted to you with the help of the Ruach Hakadesh, the Holy Spirit who lives in all of us.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thank you.

Will you all please stand for the reading of the Gospel? This reading comes from the 17th chapter of Luke, beginning in verse five. The emissaries or the disciples said to the Lord, increase our trust or our faith. The Lord replied, if you had trust as tiny as a mustard seed, you would say to this fig tree, be uprooted and replanted in the sea, and it would obey you. Be uprooted. If one of you has a slave tending the sheep or plowing when he comes back from the field will you say to him, Come along now, sit down and eat? No. You'll say, Get my supper ready, dress for work and serve me until I have finished eating and drinking. After that, you may eat and drink. Does he thank the slave because he did what he was told to do? No. It's the same with you. When you have done everything you were told to do, you should be saying, we're just ordinary slaves. We have only done our duty, the word of the Lord.

Can the kids come up here, please? Yeah. All right. Now, you heard Mr. Nichols just doing the reading, right? Did any of you hear some strange words that you weren't used to? Like what? Probably hard to pronounce, huh? Did anybody hear the word Yeshua? Who is Yeshua? Yeshua is God. That's right. He's Jesus. Yeshua is probably the name that Jesus heard when he was younger. When people called his name, they said Yeshua. Yeshua. So how come we call him Jesus? Because we have a different language. That's right. And you know what? If you go to lots of different countries, there's all kinds of different ways that God is named and that Jesus name sounds among the Arabs. You know what the Arabs call them? They call them Issa, but they're all kind of related. Issa. Jesus. Jesus. Yeshua. I think it's wonderful that God so wants us to understand Him, that His Word is translated into all kinds of different languages so that people from all around the world can understand Him, just like you. Is that awesome? It is. And so now when you go to kids Alive, you're going to be taught in English, because that's the language you speak.

And your teachers are going to be faithful to teach you all about God's Word. Can I get a high five for that? And now I would love to bring Caleb Burr up here. Caleb so graciously accepted the call to preach the Word of God to us today. Caleb is an associate pastor at Holy Trinity Church in Raleigh, a church that has really prayed for us and supported us in many ways. And you can hear his daughter

over there. That is Halle. And being picked up is Garner. Here we are in Garner. And that's Garner. And his wife's name is Page. So we want to welcome you, Paige and Halle and Garner. Welcome to you. And we're so grateful to have Caleb here to preach the Word to us. Gave me a chance to have a little vacation with my wife for our anniversary, which we just celebrated our 37th this week. So, Caleb, welcome to you. We're looking forward to hearing you.

Is this okay? Can everyone hear me at this amount? Perfect. Well, it truly is a pleasure to be with you all this morning. It's a privilege to be able to open God's Word to you and with you. So let me pray as we start. Oh, father, we ask that Your Spirit would come and fill this place. Lord, we don't just want an empty word. We want to experience you. We want to be transformed. We want to be new creations. And we know we can only do that by the power of Your spirit, Lord. Unless you build it, the labor is labor in vain. So we ask, Father, that you'd be in this place and that you would be super charging these words to transform our souls. We ask that in Jesus name. Amen. Well, it is good to be with you this morning, and by bit of a way of an introduction, I want to share a story with you from college. Now, college is a unique time, so I want to qualify that as you hear this story. When I was a freshman, like many people at that age, I was insecure, and so this resulted in some foot in the mouth situations, especially in combination with my impulsivity and intensity.

So one evening, I was talking to two women about some topic, and by the end of the conversation, my comments had painted me in a less than ideal light. So as they got up and began to depart the dining hall, I saw them chatting with each other. And in my insecurity, I thought that they were still talking about me, maybe mocking my thoughts or speaking not well of me. This is too much to handle for an 18 year old. And so the next time I saw one of these girls, I went up to her and asked her, were you talking about me when you were walking away? It's a little intense and impulsive, I know, but her response, though, has stuck with me ever since then, not because of what she said, but rather what they didn't say about me. She responded by saying, we were not talking or thinking about you at all once we left the table. Get over yourself. You're not the center of the universe. You know, the Holy Scriptures, they remind us that we are not the center of the universe as well. God already resides there. God's word shatters our self referential hall of mirrors.

It elevates God's purpose, his plan, and his pleasures above our own. And this occurs in our passage this morning. Luke 17 encourages us to keep God central in our faith because it's our duty just to do that. So let's begin by looking at the centrality of God in faith. And I'm going to be quoting from the English Standard version, the ESV. So if you have that, you can look at that. I'll also read it aloud so that you can hear it. So in Luke 17, verses five and six, it teach us about the Source, power and purpose of faith. So if you're notetakers it's, the Source, power and purpose of faith. So let me read verse five again for you this morning. The apostle said to the Lord, increase our faith. So by this time in the Gospel of Luke, the apostles have witnessed incredible miracles and signs. They've seen Jesus perform wonders, such as healing the sick, curing the lame, and casting out demons. And so, while they don't understand his full messianic purpose or his trinitarian identity, they know Jesus is special. He has power to impact their faith. And so in our text, I want you to notice that the word Lord is used in the first verse, and it's used again in verse six.

Now this word hasn't been used actually since Luke 13. The fact that it comes back on stage now twice no less, is worthy of note. So Luke wants the readers to realize that the apostles are asking the Lord of the Universe to increase their faith. For all the disciples get wrong through the Gospels. Let's be honest, they're kind of bumbling Indians. Time and time again, I applaud them for their actions in this passage. Whether they know it or not, they went directly to the CEO of the Kingdom of God when they asked for more faith. Jesus is the source of faith, and so he can increase it. They don't putts around trying to obtain faith by digging deeper within themselves. They don't try to earn it with more religious fervor. They simply put their requests before the Lord, knowing as their Lord, he has the authority. We must pattern our lives like the apostles in this situation. When we need spiritual increase of realities like faith, our default should be simply asking Jesus for it. For as easy as this sounds, it can be challenging for many. I've heard it said that humans should be called human doers rather than human beings.

We like to do rather than be. We prefer to solve our own problems with human engineered solutions.

I'm especially like that with my kids that you just saw. So I've got a two year old, two and a half year old named Hallie, and I want her to grow up knowing God's word. So naturally, my wife and I were trying to read her Bible stories from a children's Bible when we put her down for bed. Now, over the past few months, Halle has been really resistant to reading stories from the Bible. She'd rather read Llama, Llama Red Pajama or Good Night Moon? More so than stories from the Jesus Storybook Bible. And so this has been challenging and disheartening. As a pastor, but more importantly, as her father, I've tried a variety of human engineered outcomes to get her to read the Bible. I've attempted force that didn't end well. I've tried putting Bibles in key locations so that she'd find them and want to read them. I've tried different Bibles. I've even tried bribery. None of it has worked. The one thing that did work happened a few weeks ago. So I got desperate. So I do what a lot of desperate people do.

I asked Jesus for help I prayed, pleading that Jesus might grant her the desire to read His Word. You know, that very night, Halle picked up her Bible on her own accord, without a prompt or thought from me, and she asked to read a story from the Bible. Jesus is the source of faith, and he grants his people's requests. What can you ask Jesus for this morning? What spiritual reality, what fruit and spirit? What work of God do you desire? Is it more faith, peace, joy, patience, kindness, love? And the 15 seconds of silence that follows? Let's fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and just ask Him what we might need on behalf of ourselves or others. Let's just take 15 seconds and do that really quick. We've only made it through nine words of our passage this morning, so let's move on and let's look at verse six. And so as a preference, I want to state that people can be incredibly self referential. As I said in that story and showed in that story, people think about themselves, and they think that the world revolves around them.

And as a consequence of this, humans struggle with comparison. They don't believe. They measure up. So when we look around, we see others who appear richer, happier, more powerful, and even better looking than ourselves. And this mindset can even impact a person's spirituality, particularly when it comes to faith. People think others have more faith than they do. And maybe this morning, in that moment of silence, one of you felt like you needed a greater quantity of faith. So if you felt like that this morning, as we've seen in this passage, you are in good company with the apostles of Luke 17. They, too, felt like they needed to add to their faith. But Jesus tries to update some of the ways they view faith, especially it's power. So this is where I want to transition to begin discussing the power of faith. So look at me at verse six, 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. For a little context, right before our passage, the apostles have heard some of Jesus's teachings.

Jesus recently preached on temptation, rebuking sinners, repentance, and limitless forgiveness. And these are core realities of the Kingdom of God. And even though the apostles want to live like this, they struggle to do so, to live as Jesus commands, the apostles believe they need Jesus to add to their faith. Yet this the apostles believe a higher quantity of faith correlates to a higher quantity of faithful outcomes. Jesus challenges this way of thinking about faith. For Jesus, it's about the mere existence of faith in the location of faith's power. So Jesus helps them grasp this concept by discussing a mustard seed, a mulberry tree in the seed, you've probably heard about a mustard seed and that it's incredibly tiny, one of the smallest that's out there. What you might not know are facts about the mulberry tree. You don't see this on Instagram or on social media that often. The mulberry tree is a really strong tree and its strength comes from its extensive and expansive network of roots. So in the apostles mind, it would have been just as hopeless uprooting this type of tree as it would be to move a mountain. And on top of that, it's impossible to plant a tree in the sea.

So with all this in mind, in verse six, Jesus is saying that faith's presence is more crucial than its quantity. Eugene Peterson, who wrote a modern translation of the Bible, renders verse six in a really helpful way that gets at this nuance. This is how we translate it. But the Master said, you don't need more faith. There's no more or less in faith. If you have a bare kernel of faith, say, the size of a poppy seed, you could say to the sycamore tree, go jump in the lake. And it would do it. Do you hear that? Jesus is telling the apostles that they don't need more faith. The quantity doesn't matter. There's no more or less in faith. Faith's presence alone is enough to accomplish wonders. So the apostles don't need some divine supplement of faith to live differently. And the reason is because faith is simply a channel for God's power. That's the key. The power of faith comes from God. When a person thinks of

faith in terms of quantities, they become the subject. It goes like this I don't have enough faith to do this, so I need more faith to see a miracle.

I need more faith to bring about this healing. I need more faith in God for Him to fix this marriage. In all these cases, the emphasis is placed on the person in what they have or don't have. And so they become the source of faith power and the precursor to God's action. Notice the word could in verse six. You could say to this mulberry tree be uprooted and planted in the sea and it would obey you. The reason this could happen is because with God, anything is possible. When God is in the picture, unexpected and surprising realities become commonplace. Faith's presence is more important than its quality quantity because it's God who brings about faith's outcome. And this is really good news, because it means that God's actions aren't caused by an individual's faith filledness or faithfulness. Therefore, God works on behalf of his people, even when they run in the wrong direction, even when they desire the wrong things. And this is what we as humans do. We desire the wrong things even when it comes to faith. Our faith can be directed towards misplaced outcomes. And so let's begin talking about the purpose of faith.

When I was a young boy, I read this verse and it caused me to try to harness faith for my own ends. One morning, I walked to the edge of a lake and I literally tried to walk on water. I won't make you raise your hand to identify if you've tried to do something like this, but I wonder if there are one or two of you who can resonate with an experience like this. So I stood at water's edge. I prayed that God would fill me up with faith. I called on every ounce of faith within me and I took that step forward, splash my foot crashed through the surface of the water. As expected, I was wet and wondering, is my faith lacking? You know, Luke 17 reminds us that the purpose of faith is not sensational feats or spectacular wonders to inspire personal awe or selfish motives. When Jesus talks about uprooting a tree and planting it in the sea, he's making a metaphor. Jesus doesn't want his people wasting their time trying to do largescale faith hydroponics with trees and seas. Nor does he want them spending their precious moments on earth trying to walk on water.

Faith's purpose is to give God's people the conviction to live based on the coming kingdom of God. It enables the apostles to live in those ways that feel impossible. Faith gives Christians the confidence to live even when everything around them tells them to do otherwise. You know, faith gives us the assurance to repent and that our repentance is not in vain. Even when every fiber of our being wants to hold on to pride and self justification. Faith gives us the conviction to be unashamed of the Gospel. Even as we experience worldly persecution.

When.

We place our trust and faith in Jesus, it makes us righteous in God's eyes. So in these first two verses of Luke 17, the reader observes that Jesus is the source of faith. Faith's power derives from God and its purpose orbits around the principles of the kingdom of heaven. You know, but having faith like this doesn't make humans great, nor does it enable people to command God to do their bidding. We as humans have no claim over God, no matter what we do for Him. Remember, he's at the center of the reality. He's at the center of reality, not us. He is the master and we are the servants who simply perform our duty. And so this brings us to our final discussion in section of verses this morning. This is verses seven through ten. I'm going to read that again. Will anyone of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him, when he comes in from the field, come at once and recline at table? 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?

Does he think the servant because he did what was commanded. So you also, when you have done what you were commanded, say, we are unworthy servants, we have only done what was our duty. Now, this text is a series of three rhetorical questions that explore the interaction between a servant and a master. Verse seven through nine reads from the position of the master. But then unexpectedly in verse ten, it switches to the perspective of the servant. The main gist of this section of verses is that in all situations the master takes center stage. The servant's role is to serve his master. This must be done faithfully, with no eye for reward or even thanks. Now, this text may feel a bit harsh to some of you upon first read, at least it did for me when I first read it. I'm like, Yikes, Jesus, couldn't

you have been a bit softer with this? Where's the biblical footnote to get me out of this situation? Because of this feeling, I want to speak to what this text is not doing and what it is doing. So verse ten sums up the prior three verses and it doles out this summary application point.

It reads, we are unworthy servants, we have only done what was our duty. Now, this concept of unworthiness is not referencing the inherent dignity of humans. We are made in God's image and he gives us value, and this gives us value in his eyes. If you recall elsewhere, Jesus even says we're no longer servants but friends and he invites us to feast with Him in the final banquet in Zion. So therefore, this text is by no means an invitation to self deprecation. It's just not doing that. So what is it doing? Well, this whole set of texts foils our relationship with God. It encourages the reader to keep God central because that is the duty of God's servant, to keep Him central. One commentator summarizes this passage like this if a mere man is entitled to make such far reaching demands on the services of his servant, how much more is God entitled to require the utmost from his servants in the manifestation and extension of his kingdom? Among humans, God has total claim on the world and all that is within it, including us. Our duty is to serve Him faithfully, no matter what he asks, because he is our master.

Therefore, when Jesus uses the word unworthy, he's speaking about function rather than dignity. As creatures and servants, humans are unworthy to be on the same pedestal and level as God. We're not worthy of special praise and we don't have the authority to command the cosmos. The duty of man is to keep God at the center of their lives, stay true to the gospel, guard against sin, be forgiving, keep the faith. Humankind's duty is summed up in the great commandment. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. That is our duty. And yet even if we fulfill our duty, our faithfulness doesn't mandate a response from God. We aren't even owed a word of thanks. You know, this would have been just as jarring to the audience of Luke's gospel. This would have been jarring to the audience of Luke's gospel. So you may have talked about this at one point or another, as I know you're going through the gospel of Luke. So Luke's audience is a gentile audience. So these are likely highly educated individuals who would have had a deep understanding or affinity to the highbrow culture of the time.

So Luke is writing to culture makers and influencers. So the Greco Roman world at that time was a quid pro quo understanding when it came to the gods. There was a popular and prevalent religious understanding of patron clients. So it went that if a person followed the prescribed rules or rituals, the God would bless them with a certain outcome. Here's what I mean by that. For example, if you offered sacrifices to the God of fertility or dedicated your life to her, she'd bless you with children. If you offered food or drink offerings to the gods of the harvest, then he would bless you with a rich crop. Jesus turns this world view upside down. He says God is not bound to act in any way because his people have done their duty. God has master doesn't owe his servants any special favors or reciprocal benefits just because they've been good little worshippers. This is a good reminder because many of us, myself included, still operate with what I call gumball dynamics. In the back of my mind, by this I mean we treat God like a gumball machine. With a gumball machine, you put a quarter in and you get a gumball out as a reward.

Similarly, some of us make our prayers to God, and we expect certain miracles to happen. Some of us faithfully serve God, and we expect reprieve from hard times and suffering. We tithe, so we expect more blessings in our companies. We go to church, and so some of us think that deems us a ticket into heaven, and yet we have no claim upon God. Our actions don't earn merits before God, nor do they put our master in our debt. We are called to faithfully discharge our duty with no eye for reward because he's at the center of reality. You know, the fact that this is true makes the later actions of Jesus all the more glorious and aweinspiring. Who is the one servant who is worthy? Jesus. Even though God is not mandated to do anything for or because of us, Jesus as the Son of God, in the words of Philippians Two, did not count equality with God a thing to be held on to, but emptied himself. Taking on the form of a servant, he humbled himself by being obedient to the point of death, even death upon a cross. Jesus' mere breath holds the universe together.

He is the alpha and the omega. Yet as the Master, he put aside his divine priorities and took on the form of a servant. We're about to partake in the Lord's supper here. Before that passover meal, rather

than taking the seat of honor and authority, he takes off his cloak, ties it around his waist, and he washes his disciples feet. Rather than exercising his authority, he offers himself up for his wayward servants. He suffers death, death upon the cross, so that his people might taste the freedom of salvation. By faith, Jesus does what we can never do. He's the servant we can never be. When we are faithless, he remains faithful. God is worthy to be at the center of our reality. Luke 17 heralds this truth. And so we, too must keep God at the center of our faith, for that is our duty. Jesus is the source of faith, and God alone empowers faith. Faith provides us the assurance and conviction to follow in the ways of the kingdom, even when it's difficult. As servants, our faith doesn't make us have any claim upon God, our master. Our actions don't mandate a response from God.

In fact, even though we deserve judgment, God extends grace. While we were still sinners, Jesus took on the form of flesh and dies the death that we deserve so that we might experience the life we could never earn. And our response must be to reaffirm the centrality of God. Let's pray. Lord, just as those apostles came and asked you to increase their faith, so too do we come to you now, Jesus, asking that you might increase our faith in you. Lord, make yourself the center of our reality, crucify anything within us that would place us on the throne. Spirit, we ask that as we go from this place, as we even partake in Your table, that you would gently wash over us by Your spirit of grace, that we would be transformed into Your image and likeness, that as you served us, we might serve others, fulfilling our duty to love God and love others. We ask that in the name of Jesus Christ. I'm bye.