

The gospel of Luke has the most of Christ's teachings out of all four of the gospels. And because it has so much meat inside, it can be easy to get lost in the forest and forget why Jesus is teaching these things. Jesus is not a regular traveling philosopher or rabbi simply sharing His lessons. He has come to proclaim the arrival of the kingdom of God and Himself as the promised King. And all of His teachings have this theme in mind. They are trying to explain to us what the Kingdom of God is like and how then we should live. In a way every single passage of the book is about how members of Christ's kingdom are meant to live.

This morning in Luke 17 our passage will tell us the kind of faith the kingdom requires, the attitude we need to have, and the timing of the kingdom we should be prepared for. Turn with me in your Bibles.

Point one: **The duty of the kingdom is a repentant faith (v. 1-10)**

And the first mark of a repentant faith is avoiding sin.

Repentance means a turning away from sin.

It is not just being sorry that you have been caught.

It's not just saying I'm sorry if you were offended.

Repentance acknowledges the sin that is committed and then moving forward tries to be different.

Moving forward repentance avoids sin.

Verse 1, **"and he said he was disciples "temptations to sin are sure to come,"**

The reality is that there will always be temptations to sin.

Whether you were a follower in Jesus or you are not there will be plenty of opportunities for you to sin.

No matter how much we might wish, temptations are sure to come into our lives.

But if we live with a repentant faith that we can avoid the temptations.

We can refuse to give in to the temptation.

It can remain a temptation instead of an incident of sin.

Jesus continues to say what a repentant faith is.

It is not just that we avoid sin ourselves,

But if we are really repentant then we don't want to lead anyone else into sin.

So we need to avoid the temptation to sin and to not tempt others to sin.

The rest of verse 1 **"but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea that he should cause one of these little ones to sin."**

There is a prophetic woe against those who lead others to sin.

When we tempt other people to sin Jesus says it would be better for you to have a rope tied around your neck and be thrown into the sea to drown.

How can we tempt other people to sin?

You might like me think of obvious examples.

You might picture someone standing on the corner offering you drugs.

Or calling up somebody and asking them if they want to come over and get drunk together.

Those are obvious temptations to sin.

But I don't think that is the particular way that most of us here tempt others to sin.

My fear is that we can let ourselves off the hook.

We can start to think that tempting others to sin is a serious action that other people do not us.

I think we do tempt other people to sin.

We tempt people to sin when we sin against them.

When you are rude to somebody, or unfairly criticize them or are being passive-aggressive, does that not tempt them to sin and how they talk back to you?

When we hurt others we sin against others does that not tempt them to sin against you?

We need to learn to see that our sin against others is not just a sin against God and them it is also leading and tempting them to sin themselves.

And when Jesus says these **"little ones to sin."**

It does not appear that He just means children.

Although certainly, we can understand somebody who sins against children or who leads children down a path of sin deserves harsh judgment because of the price that they will have to pay.

But it appears to have a wider range than that.

He seems to refer to Young Christians as well those who are young followers of Jesus.

Or those who are recent converts.

In the Jewish world the little one was usually kind of like an immature disciple somebody was still figuring it out.

And the problem with immature people is that their immature and can be frustrating.

But Jesus tells us that we have to take care.

And if we are going to have a repentant Faith then we need to try and help others repent and teach them how to avoid sin and to stay away from it not take them right up to sin's door.

The main way this is supposed to happen is how we respond to our brothers and sisters when they sin, even when they are a mess.

Verse 3, **"pay attention to yourselves! if your brother sins rebuke him"**

If we see our brothers and sisters in the faith sinning then we are commanded to rebuke them.

We are to tell them to stop.

This is an uncomfortable part of our duty as Christians.

Now we are not to go around rebuking unbelievers but we are commanded to rebuke our brothers and sisters in the faith.

It is not that we correct everybody we come into contact with it is that we correct our fellow believers.

"and if he repents forgive them and if he sends against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times saying, I repent you must forgive him."

So part of our responsibility as well of repentant faith is to forgive them.

This does not mean there are no consequences for sin.

It does not mean that we might not have to put up healthy boundaries.

But it does mean that we forgive.

There is always a way forward and a path towards redemption and restoration.

After all this is a picture of the Gospel.

We have to repeatedly forgive because this is what Jesus does for us.

Jesus forgives us in all of our sins.

His mercy never runs out no matter how much we abuse it and no matter how many times we keep coming back to Him on the same day.

And so this should encourage us to continually repent of our sins.

And it should encourage us to forgive each other.

Because this is what a repentant Faith looks like.

Now that sounds really hard.

It's hard to forgive somebody repeatedly for the same thing that they keep doing.

And if we're going to do that we need to have faith and we might need to have more faith than we have now.

This is why in verse 5, **"The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"**

This is a good response.

They are asking for God's help for them to have this kind of faith.

They think they might have some faith, but they need more.

And Jesus responds with one of His more famous statements.

Verse 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."**

I think we get off track on what this statement means.

It is not Jesus talking about all the amazing things we can accomplish with faith.

This is not Jesus telling us that if you just really believed then you could work miracles like healing the blind and making it rain from heaven.

What Jesus seems to say, is that a small amount of faith is enough.

Even a little faith can do amazing things.

Like forgiving someone for the 7th time that day.

We do not need to have the faith of Peter to take that first step on water.

We do not need the faith of King David to fight the giant without fear.

We do not need the faith of Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego to go into the flames.

We just need a little faith.

Because a little faith in Christ is all that is required.

Jesus then tells a short story about a servant.

Verse 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 story is about a servant doing whatever his master commands.

Now in verse 9 the phrase "thank the servant" actually means "find favor."

It doesn't mean that the master won't say thank you.

It means that the servant is not going to find special favor.

He will not get extra blessings and gifts from his master.

Why?

Because the servant has just done his duty.

He has gone above and beyond.

He has not done what no one would do.

He has done what was expected.

He has done what was commanded.

Just as the servant in the story was commanded, so have we.

We are commanded to have a repentant faith.

And we should do our duty.

We should do what citizens of the kingdom of God,

Who have been commanded by their king do.

And this is not about us doing it out of drudgery.

It is not about dragging our feet in faith because God commanded us to.

It means that our faith should be natural.

It should just abound out of us.

We should be people who repent.

We should be people who confront one another's sin in love.

We should be a people who forgive each other.

Even when we keep having to forgive each other.

We should be a people who have faith no matter how small.

And we should not do it because we are trying to earn something.

We should not do it because we want to earn salvation or eternal rewards.

We should just do it because it is who we are.

It should be as natural as breathing.

Point 2: **We should have an attitude of gratitude.**

The attitude of those in the kingdom of God should be gratitude.

We should be grateful for the mercy Jesus has shown us.

Jesus shows us this through His interaction with some lepers.

Verse 11, **"On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance"**

When Jesus comes into this village there are ten lepers.

And they do not come close.

They are standing far away.

They are so far away that they have to yell for Jesus to hear them.

Verse 13, **"and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."**

They stand at the distance because lepers are unclean.

They cannot come close to people.

Most of the time when they are in a village,

if they are even allowed close by,

They have to constantly yell, "unclean, unclean."

But this time they do not yell out that they are unclean.

They cry out to beg for mercy.

Verse 14, **"When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."**

Jesus shows mercy to them.

Because everyone who dares to ask for it gets it.

You can cry out to Jesus from wherever you are.

You can scream it aloud.

You can whisper it quietly in your heart.

But all who cry out to Jesus will be heard.

You will find mercy.

But He tells them something interesting.

He does not heal them immediately.

He tells them to go and show themselves to the priest.

Leviticus 13 describes in detail how the lepers must do this.

Because they cannot be declared "clean" or healed until the priest sees them.

Jesus tells them to head towards the priest and to show the priest their bodies.

Now if they looked down at them now, they would see they weren't healed.

They would know that they still had leprosy.

But Jesus is asking them to go in faith.

To start walking towards the priest believing that Jesus would heal them.

It would have required faith to start walking.

It reminds me of God telling Abraham.

God told him to leave all that he knew to go to a place God would show him.

And like Abraham, they go in faith.

"And as they went they were cleansed."

As they go in faith, they are healed and made clean.

Somewhere on the journey, while walking toward the priest,

That is when Jesus heals them.

Verse 15, **"Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed,"**

One of them happens to look down and notice.

Somewhere on the journey he recognizes that they cry has been heard.

Jesus truly did heal them.

And he immediately

"Turned back, praising God with a loud voice; 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan."

He runs back to thank Jesus.

The same loud voice that desperately cried for mercy now shouts praise.

The voice that loudly cried "unclean" now praises the God who makes people clean.

And this leper goes right to Jesus.

No longer is he at a distance, now he goes right to Christ's feet.

And He falls at them giving thanks.

We don't know for sure, but it seems likely that he touched Jesus.
He specifically thanks Jesus for healing him.

And this is remarkable especially because he is a Samaritan.
He is the least likely person to come back.

But he does.

He also does so before going to the priest.

He does not wait.

He does not go to the priest first.

He does not wait until he has been declared clean.

Because he does anything, he returns to Jesus.

Verse 17, **"Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"**

Jesus wants to know why only one leper comes back.

Ten of them were cleansed.

But the only one who came back was the foreigner.

It was the unexpected one who returned.

Samaritans were thought to be heretics.

They were the enemy not the heroes.

But all throughout the Bible, it is the unexpected and overlooked who have true faith.

Verse 19, **"And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."**

Jesus tells him to stand and head back to the priest.

Continue on his way and get back to his life.

And his faith has saved him.

I do not think that this is just, "your faith has healed you."

I think this is Jesus saying that his faith has saved him.

The question we have to ask ourselves from this story is, "Are we grateful?"

Because millions of people have experienced blessings from God.

But not everyone is grateful.

Not everyone appreciates the mercy we have seen.

There were nine lepers that did not come back.

Nine people who were healed that were not grateful.

Only the Samaritan is.

We should be like the Samaritan.

We need to be grateful.

We should sing on Sunday morning like those who are grateful.

We should receive the cup and eat the bread of communion gratefully.

We should live all of our lives in gratitude for the salvation we have been given.

Point 3: **Recognize that the kingdom is both here and coming (v. 20-37).**

Verse 20, **"Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come,"**

The Pharisees want to know when the kingdom is coming.

It is a question the disciples ask.

Everyone asks because they all want to know.

When is Israel going to be restored to power and glory?

When will the Kingdom of God reign?

When is the Messiah going to start keeping His promises?

Jesus gives a frustrating answer.

Verse 20, **"The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."**

He says that they will not be able to see the kingdom when it comes.

It will not be able to be observed.

Their vision of the kingdom is wrong.

They expect it to come physically, literally, and obviously.

They expect to be able to look and point to it.

But Jesus says that they will not be able to.

Why? Because the kingdom of God is already here.

It is in their midst and its King is standing before them.

The kingdom is both here in the now and the not yet.

It is actually present at this moment.

But it will come in a more full sense when Christ returns.

Verse 22, **"And he said to the disciples, 'The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.'"**

How many of you desire to see the days of the kingdom?

How many of you long for Jesus to make His kingdom reign?

Hopefully all of us do.

But Jesus tells us that we won't see it fully yet.

Verse 23, **"And they will say to you, 'Look, there!' or 'Look, here!' Do not go out or follow them."**

This is a warning to us.

There will be people who try to tell us that the end is coming.

They will try to predict the appearance of the kingdom.

They will pull out their charts and knowledge of prophecy to say, "look at this news story!"

"Read the newspaper"

"Watch this tik-tok"

See, the kingdom of God is coming! We are close to the end times.

Jesus says not to listen to those people.

This is relevant for us still today.

There is a war right now with Israel, Palestine, and the terrorist organization Hamas.

There will be many tempted to point towards wars and the news.

And they will try to explain what it means.

They will tell you about prophecies being fulfilled and the end is close.

Jesus says not to listen to them.

No one is going to be able to figure out the future coming of the kingdom ahead of time.

Verse 24, **"For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day."**

No one can miss it when lightening strikes.

You see it light up the entire sky.

You hear the thunder boom.

Just as no one can miss it when lightening comes, no one will miss the kingdom when it appears in the future.

No one will have to debate and wonder if this is truly it.

We will all know.

But when will the kingdom come?

Verse 25, **"But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."**

The kingdom of Jesus cannot come until He suffers and dies.

The Kingdom will come and bring glorious victory.

But that victory only comes through suffering, rejection, and death.

It does not come through parades of glory, but of shame.

Verse 26, **"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."**

And the future appearance of God's kingdom will be unexpected.

In Noah's day most people just went about their business.

They went through ordinary life and suddenly the flood came to destroy them.

This is what God's kingdom will be like in the future.

It will come unexpectedly, suddenly, and the wicked and evil will be destroyed.

Verse 28, **"Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all"**

The same thing happened in Sodom.

They went about their normal days, and God's judgment came.

Verse 30, **"so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed."**

God's kingdom will come like that.

And when it comes the wicked will face justice.

Those who have not put their faith in Jesus.

Those who have not begged for mercy will not find it.

It is the day when justice will finally reign.

Verse 31, **"On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back."**

The point for us is not to figure out the details of God's coming.

The point is that we should be ready.

That we should not be doing what the world does, but preparing for that day.

Verse 32, **"Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it."**

Lot was saved from Sodom and Gomorrah.

But she looked back with longing.

She wanted to return to a that life instead of the salvation God offered.

So she died and was turned to salt.

Likewise, we must not look back.

We must look forward to the kingdom that is to come.

We must love God's kingdom more than the kingdoms of this world.

We must live for the eternal future instead of the fading present.

Verse 34, **"I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. 35 There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left."**

This is a famous image.

The kingdom appears and some are taken away and others are left.

But it is not clear what exactly it means.

Being taken could be a good thing as in taken away and saved from judgement.

Or it could be the more normal use of "taken" which means taken away to judgement.

They are washed away by the flood, fire, or sulphur, and only the righteous remain.

I do not believe in the rapture.

I do not think there will be a secret coming of Jesus before His true and final return.

I have looked and studied but I just don't see it in Scripture.

This passage seems to say that Christ's coming will be obvious and clear not secret or mysterious.

I think Jesus will return in power in glory after a period of suffering and tribulation.

He will then set up His kingdom and rule and reign forever in peace.

I could be wrong.

Maybe the Bible does teach a secret coming.

But it is not obvious or clear here in this place.

The main idea is that we need to be ready.

Because some people will be ready and others won't be.

Verse 37, **"And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."**

This last verse is strange and hard to understand.

It seems to me like the disciples are asking where these people are being taken.

And Jesus gives a vague answer about being taken to a place of death where vultures gather around corpses.

Being taken does not seem like a good thing to me.

Now, we can get distracted by all of the questions and things we do not understand about when Jesus will return.

We can chase down all the questions and read all the commentaries and scholars.

I have done plenty of that this week and I still don't have all the answers.

Part of that is the point.

We do not and never will have all of the answer about the kingdom until it arrives.

And when it does arrive no one is going to miss it.

It will become very clear and obvious.

For now, we should pay attention to the part of the kingdom that is here now.

A kingdom that is indestructible and can never fade.

A kingdom whose light will continue to shine no matter how dark the world gets.

A kingdom whose king has already arrived.

Our salvation is not in the future.

Jesus already brought it.

We can experience it here and now.

While we wait for the joy that is sure to come.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] The duty of the kingdom is a repentant faith. The attitude of the kingdom is gratitude. The timing of the kingdom is both now and not yet.
2. [Challenge] As we go into our week, let us live with repentant faith. Avoiding sin and forgiving each other. Let us have an attitude of gratitude for the salvation we have been given. And let us enjoy the kingdom that is here now as we look forward to the one that is to come.