

“Rah Rah Jesus”

Scripture: Luke 17:(1-4) 5-10

Graphic: sports, locker room, pom-poms

Key Verses: 17:6 The Lord replied, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

Theme: Faith is often misunderstood by those wanting to be faithful. We don’t need MORE faith, we need to understand that faith enables God to work in our lives in ways that defy human experience – to live by Jesus’ teachings and example. This is what’s required and expected.

1) Introduction

- a) How many of you have seen the movie *Facing the Giants*? If you haven’t seen it, I suggest you rent it or get it from Netflix or whatever...maybe instead of watching the Bills game today...way more inspiring than that.
- b) *Facing the Giants* is a movie about faith and football...about overcoming the impossible odds...it’s about having faith that God is equipping us to serve Him where we are planted...it’s about relying on God for all aspects of our lives and turning to Him for perseverance and strength...it’s a great movie.
- c) And right before the BIG GAME, to win the state championship, Coach Grant Taylor gives his players an emotional pep talk. He said, “We weren't supposed to have a winning season, but we do. We weren't supposed to advance to the playoffs, but we did. We're not supposed to be here, but we are.” He goes on to say that he doesn’t know what will happen in the game...in fact, chances are good they will get crushed by this bigger team...stronger opponent.
- d) And Coach asks them to do what they know is required to win the game and then give it all they’ve got...
- e) And because it’s Hollywood, they win the game in the last second, they all celebrate and life is good...
- f) So NOT like our lives, sometimes! Our lives aren’t Hollywood, are they? We don’t always win the game, do we? There are times when the odds against us are overwhelming!
- g) And for even the most FAITHFUL among us, there are circumstances and people in our lives that require us to question if we have what it takes.

- h) When our faith is tested and the only thing we can say to God in our moment of desperate searching for help is, “God give me more so I can do what you’re asking...I don’t have what it takes.”
- i) Hollywood’s answer to this faith dilemma is – it’ll work out, ‘cause it always does.
- j) The world’s answer is – you win some, you lose some, so do what feels right...you deserve to be happy.
- k) And then there’s Jesus’ answer – you don’t need more faith, my child; you need to understand that the faith you have is what allows God to work through you for His glory.
- l) And even though Coach Taylor gave his team a pep talk that ended up with a win and a trophy and championship, Jesus gives his disciples a completely different take on the outcome of faith...
- m) Turn with me to Luke chapter 17, starting in verse 5...
- n) Pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verse 17:5

- i) This seems like a valid request from the followers of Jesus. Increase our faith, Jesus!
- ii) Mark 9:24 – the man whose son had been healed by Jesus cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!”
- iii) Jesus healed a paralytic in Luke 5:20 – When he saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your son are forgiven you.”
- iv) In Luke 7:9, Jesus heals the Centurion’s servant because of...what? FAITH!
- v) The sinful woman in Luke 7:50...Jesus said to the woman, “Your FAITH has saved you; go in peace”
- vi) Luke 8:48 – Jesus heals a woman who had been bleeding because of her _____ (FAITH).

- vii) Next week, we'll take a look at the story of the ten lepers healed by Jesus... "Get up and go on your way; your FAITH has made you well"
- viii) The list goes on...
- ix) FAITH, according to Jesus and the NT authors, is something we should have.
- x) And so, when the disciples come to Jesus to ask to have their faith INCREASED, it seems to me to be a fairly valid request.
- xi) But Jesus doesn't see it that way... Jesus has a different perspective, because Jesus knows them better than they know themselves.
- xii) But before we get to Jesus' response... let's backtrack four verses to find out WHY they wanted more faith...
- xiii) READ VERSES 1-5
- xiv) Are you kidding, Jesus! We can't possibly be expected to do these things that you have said... we don't have what it takes! We're not faithful enough...
- xv) We can't defeat the giant! He's too big!
- xvi) We can't forgive those Samaritans who we hate! They're sinners!
- xvii) I can't get rid of this sin in my life, God! It's too powerful!
- xviii) But we want to! We want to, Jesus, because we're your followers!
- xix) See, there's the disconnect! We want to do what God is asking, but we're convinced, like the disciples, that we don't have what it takes.
- xx) Jesus was asking the disciples to forgive beyond human experience. He was asking to rebuke those Christians that were sinning. He was asking them to NEVER be the one that caused another person to sin.
- xxi) These were HARD THINGS Jesus expected. These are hard things for us...
- xxii) But let me give us a news flash this morning... being a follower of Jesus is HARD. Things like forgiving and rebuking and being holy are the hardest things in the world because they go COMPLETELY against

our sinful human nature. It's not what we WANT to do. And those who are walking with the Lord and are being led by the Holy Spirit know that there's something wrong within them. They want to do this, but know they can't because they don't think they have what it takes...

xxiii) So what do the disciples do? What's their reaction to Jesus?

xxiv) If that's what you require, Jesus, then YOU have to give us more faith! You have to fix us so we can do what you ask.

xxv) And so Jesus just waves his magic wand and fixes them, right? Gives them more faith, right? WRONG...

b) Read verse 17:6

i) "If you really have faith even the size of a mustard seed (but you do not; yet if you had), then you would say to this tree – go!"

ii) Instead of being compassionate to the disciples, the inner core of followers that have now been with Jesus for YEARS – Jesus basically says that they have less faith than this tiny little nothing of a seed. This is NOT the pep talk they were hoping for.

iii) Now, notice that Jesus doesn't say that they have NO faith...in fact, they themselves know that because they asked for an INCREASE.

iv) Yet their faith, according to Jesus, is not yet even mustard-seed sized.

v) "Jesus, INCREASE OUR FAITH!" to which Jesus replies, "If you had even the smallest faith, which you don't, you could throw this tree in the sea"

vi) Why would anyone want to throw a tree in the sea? And a 60-foot tree at that, which is what these trees would reach. Anyone else find this a strange thing for Jesus to say? I'm thinking, "even if I had that kind of faith, it would be stupid to act like that."

vii) But see, Jesus isn't about logic here, he's trying to get their attention. He's trying to wake them up! He's not actually asking them to do this. There's no reason to throw a tree into the sea, except a theatrical demonstration of the great quantity and power of one's faith.

- viii) Jesus is telling them that faith is powerful! But the quantity of one's faith is not the main point. Jesus says, you have to understand the NATURE of faith.
- ix) Jesus shatters their illusion of faith as a commodity that can be used, if only they had more.
- x) See, and that's where we get into trouble... "if only I had more faith...
 - (1) I could live up to Jesus' expectations for me...
 - (2) I could start that ministry that I have been feeling called to start
 - (3) I could teach that class that needs a teacher...
 - (4) I could forgive my spouse for abandoning me, emotionally
 - (5) I could... rebuke... or be more holy... or whatever... if only I had more faith.
- xi) And this is exactly what the disciples are saying...
- xii) But Jesus goes on in verse 7 to give them an illustration about the nature of faith...

c) Read verses 17:7-10

- i) Some pep talk, right?
- ii) Let's break this down...
- iii) There's the master and the slave.
- iv) Now, we know that Jesus is talking here about a SMALL estate if this master has one slave who does the gardening and then comes in to prepare the meals. Larger estates would have multiple slaves to do these different tasks.
- v) Jesus is making a point, like he always does, about the SIZE of the estate and the actions of the master and the slave. This may just be a commentary on the faith of the disciples.
- vi) And the master is not going to ask the slave to sit down to a meal prior to having him prepare it? That's silly!

- vii) The implied answer to Jesus' question, "Who among you..." is basically, "Well, no one Jesus, that's just silly!"
- viii) We would ask the slave to fix the meal and then eat later...AND, Jesus asks, "Do you then thanks the slave?"
- ix) Which, of course, would elicit the response again, "Well, no, Jesus, that would be silly."
- x) Slaves were expected to do what they were expected to do. Nothing more, nothing less.
- xi) And so here comes the bombshell from Jesus...verse 10, "So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!"

3) Application

- a) As followers of Jesus, no matter how MUCH we do, we can not do more than is expected of us.
- b) We can go through a list of things that we do that would be considered by the world to be amazing acts of generosity, kindness, faith, and love...and every single one of them is exactly what Jesus expects from us. To name a few...
 - i) Tithing – giving at least ten percent of our income to the ministries of the church. World says we're crazy – too much. God expects it.
 - ii) Forgiving those who wrong us – world says to get revenge, but if you do forgive, you're way holy. Jesus says forgive seven times a day if that person asks for it and do it humbly – forgive completely.
 - iii) Rebuking those brothers and sisters who sin – world says either blast them, or ignore them, but they don't deserve it. Jesus says engage with them in love and help them.
 - iv) Jesus tells us to be holy. The world tells us to try really hard and that's all there is. Jesus wants every part of us.
- c) Every good and holy thing we do because of our faith in Jesus is exactly what's expected of us. We want to be thanked, yes. We want to be

appreciated and valued, yes. But those things are not the main reason we do any of it.

- d) The main reason we do any ministry is for God's glory and honor, and we don't earn anything in return.
- e) We are God's servants, and therefore, even when we do all that is required of us, we have done nothing for which we should expect a reward.
- f) God owes us nothing for being good Christians. Because God's favor and blessings are a matter of grace – a gift that we don't deserve.

4) Conclusion

- a) The disciples wanted Jesus to increase their faith so they could do what Jesus expected of them. Jesus answered that request by telling them they had everything they needed, as little as it was. Not because it was sufficient for THEM to do it, but because if they had faith to allow God to work through them, then nothing is outside the scope of what is expected.
- b) You don't have to have more faith; rather, you have to understand that your faith enables God to work through you in ways that defy ordinary human experience...to live by his teachings and example.
- c) The football team in *Facing the Giants* won the game, not because they had everything they needed, but because they believed that God would do what God wanted through them.
- d) Salvation comes to us, not through something that we do, primarily, but from what God has done through his Son Jesus.
- e) This table is the place to lay aside your illusions of self-righteous faithfulness, and allow God's grace and mercy to thrive through you.
- f) If you haven't accepted Jesus into your life to start that relationship, to forgive your sin, to work in your life for His glory, I pray that today is that day...come, kneel, be reborn today...put your faith in him...
- g) WCS...
- h) Let's pray...