

Luke 17:7-10

“Servants of the King”

2/1/26

1. Intro
2. Luke 17:7-10
 - a. *⁷Will 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”? ⁸Will 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”? ⁹Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.”*
3. The pressing question this morning in light of our passage is this: “What does it mean to do your duty?”
 - i. Our society gives us a few different ideas of what that means
 - b. One definition of doing one’s duty is simply to do the task that has been assigned to you...
 - i. To do the job that you’ve been given
 1. If you were to go into one of the bigger office buildings in downtown Tulsa, you might encounter a security guard at the front entry
 - a. That security guard is going to stop you as you come in
 - i. And he’s going to ask you all sorts of questions...
 1. Who are you here to see?
 2. Do you have an appointment?
 3. If it’s a really important meeting you’re going to, they might even ask to see some ID
 2. Now, you might get annoyed at all of these questions, but in the end you choose to answer them... hopefully in a patient and respectful way
 - a. Why?
 - i. Because you know the security guard is only doing his duty
 - ii. He’s doing the job that he’s been hired to do
 3. And you could look at it from HIS side of the security desk as well...
 - a. As the security guard, you may not WANT to be there
 - b. It could be really early in the morning, and you didn’t sleep well, so you’re not quite ready to “people” yet
 - c. It could be the end of the day, and you’ve dealt with a bunch of difficult people all day long, and you’re ready to get out of there and get home to some peace and quiet
 - i. But you stay until closing time...
 - ii. You keep a smile on your face...
 - iii. And you do your duty
 1. Why?
 - a. Because that is your job
 - b. The company hired you for this purpose
 - i. You agreed to the job description and the pay that was promised
 2. So you do your job... and then you move on with your day
 - d. That’s one way that we look at our duties in society
 - c. But we can take it to a higher, more noble level as well...
 - i. Let’s say that you’re a soldier in the army

1. Let's even say that you are a soldier who enlisted right after 9/11, or right after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor
 - a. WHY did so many young men, and even so many young women enlist during the days after these tragic events?
 - i. Because they saw it as their DUTY
 1. Now, they might have had different motivators in their heart
 - a. Some might have felt it was their duty to go and fight the enemies of the US...
 - i. To get back at those who dared attack us on OUR soil
 2. Others might have felt it was their duty to enlist in order to protect their loved ones and their nation from further harm
 - a. If our enemies can do this ONCE, what's to stop them from coming again
 - i. And so they enlisted in order to defend our country and keep safe what is ours
 2. Whether it was out of a motivation of vengeance, or out of a motivation to protect, they all enlisted because they believed it was their DUTY to do so
 - a. We could say the same thing for police officers or fire fighters
 - d. We could even say the same thing for many doctors and teachers, can't we?
 - i. Sure, not everyone who enters these fields have entirely pure motives, but so many doctors and nurses and surgeons... and so many teachers and coaches and school principals...
 1. They decide to do what they do because they see it as their duty to help make people BETTER
 - a. Those in the healthcare field see it as their duty to help people to live their best lives PHYSICALLY
 - b. Those in educational fields see it as their duty to help people to live their best lives MENTALLY
 - ii. For many in all of these fields – not all, but MANY – their duty is about MORE than just a task...
 1. It's about MORE than just fulfilling a contractual obligation
 - a. For those who truly LOVE to help others in these ways, they do so largely because they believe it is their duty to serve and make the world a better place
 - e. These are a couple of different ways our society defines the idea of duty
 - i. But it is so important for us to realize that, even though these are GOOD definitions of duty
 1. They DO NOT represent the full extent of what Jesus was teaching here in our passage for this morning
 - a. In order for us to see that, I think it is helpful for us to plug SOCIETY'S definitions for duty back into Jesus' words
 - i. And hopefully we will see how they fall short
4. So first, let's use society's definition of duty as simply doing the job Jesus tells you to do
 - a. Jesus says to us to go and work hard out in the field
 - i. And then when we're done working in the field, we are to come and prepare supper, and serve our Master
 1. And when we are done doing all that we have been commanded to do, we say to our Lord,
 - a. "No no... no thanks needed Jesus... I'm just doing my job."

1. Knowing that it is indeed a HIGH calling and a SERIOUS responsibility
- iii. Well, this type of service is to be commended for sure
 1. But the Scriptures are clear, my friends...
 - a. Even THIS type of commendable attitude towards our duty as followers of Christ ultimately falls short of where we are called to be as servants of Jesus Christ
 - i. In order for us to see this, we need to look more closely at two of the words that Jesus uses here in this passage
6. The first word that we'll look at is actually the last word in the passage, and it is the word we've already been examining... this word "duty"
 - a. In the English language, it's just a small, four-letter word
 - i. But in the original Greek, it's actually three separate words which express this idea of...
 1. "That which we were bound to do"
 - ii. And at the center of these three words is the word for "bound," and that is the Greek word *ophaylo*
 1. *Ophaylo* can certainly mean a duty, or a task, or an obligation
 - a. But it goes deeper than that
 - i. It isn't JUST an obligation because you've entered into a contractual agreement with someone else, like the relationship between an employee and an employer
 - ii. It isn't JUST an obligation because there is a need out in the world and you have the talents and the means by which to meet that need
 2. *Ophaylo* is an obligation that is OWED to someone else
 - a. It means that a debt has been incurred, and you are now BOUND to the one you have incurred it against
 - iii. And you are bound to that person in two ways
 1. First, you are bound to that person MORALLY
 - a. This servant has a debt to the master of the house
 - i. That implies two things...
 1. The servant didn't have the ability to pay whatever it was he was supposed to pay
 2. And, the master CHOSE to cover the debt himself
 - ii. Therefore, it is GOOD and RIGHT that that servant now be bound to the master
 1. There is a MORAL obligation
 - iii. Now, the servant COULD choose to check out of the relationship, couldn't he?
 1. He could say, "Well, no one ASKED the master to pay my debt, so I have no obligation to him..."
 - a. I'm out of here
 - b. I'm going to go live my life however I want to live my life
 - b. At that point, we'd have a pretty low view of the servant
 - i. His actions in response to the Master's goodness WERE NOT good
 - ii. His actions in response to the Master's generosity WERE NOT moral
 1. He looked upon what he was morally bound to the Master for, and he disregarded it all
 - a. The Bible would say that this is a DISGRACEFUL servant

- iii. But the servant isn't just bound to the Master morally
 - 2. He is also bound to the Master LEGALLY
 - a. You see, at some point, an agreement was made
 - i. At some point, the servant who owed a debt was brought into a legally binding agreement by the Master who paid his debt
 - 1. And now, the servant isn't just MORALLY bound to his Master
 - 2. He is now LEGALLY bound to the Master
 - 3. This is far more than just a relationship between an employee and an employer
 - 4. This is far more than just a calling to go out in the world and do some good to make it a better place
 - a. This is a morally and legally binding of one who owed a debt that they could not pay, to the one who paid it on their behalf
 - i. THAT'S what Jesus means when he uses this word, "duty"
 - b. All of this then leads us to our second word we need to look at
7. This second word is the word found in the middle of verse 10... the word "servant"
 - a. Servant is a nice, relatively safe word
 - i. When you think of the word "servant," you might have in your mind the idea of a butler or a maid
 - 1. If you think about shows like Downton Abbey, or any kind of English or colonial drama...
 - a. The butler or the maid often lives in the house of their Lord
 - i. They serve at the pleasure of the Lord of the house
 - 1. They provide meals when they're supposed to
 - 2. They keep the house clean
 - 3. They make sure all the operations of the household are functioning as they should
 - b. And in exchange for their service, the maids and butlers are taken care of
 - i. They get a room to live in
 - ii. They get food to eat
 - iii. They get clothes to wear
 - 2. It's all a fairly comfortable arrangement based off a mutually agreed-upon exchange
 - b. But this kind of early twentieth-century idea of a servant IS NOT what Jesus was referring to here
 - i. Here in verse 10, Jesus is referring to the Greek word, "*doulos*"
 - 1. And even though our modern-day translations have chosen the safer translation of servant...
 - a. The BETTER translation for *doulos* is "bond-slave"
 - i. Far from simply conveying a lowly laborer, this idea of a "bond-slave" is wrapped up with much more significance
 - c. And the primary reason for this is...
 - i. The bond-slave is OWNED by the Master
 - 1. The literal definition of this word for servant is that "it refers to a person who BELONGS TO ANOTHER and lives UNDER HIS AUTHORITY"
 - a. So, this isn't a security guard at the OneOK tower who goes back to his own home at the end of the day to do whatever he wants to do
 - b. This isn't the soldier who serves for a few deployments and then is discharged to go back to his own life
 - 2. This is a bond-slave
 - a. He is bound to another
 - b. And he lives under HIS authority

- i. Yes, he has a moral obligation to do his duty
- ii. But he also now has the LEGAL obligation to do his duty
 - 1. For he now belongs TO HIS MASTER

8. Brothers and sisters, do not miss this...

- a. When Jesus gives us this teaching in this passage, he is saying to us that this is how he expects ALL of his followers to live
 - i. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus calls his followers to go out and plow in the fields, for there is MUCH work left to do in the harvest
 - ii. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus calls his followers to go out and take care of the sheep, for there are MANY of his sheep out there that are lost and harassed and without a shepherd
 - iii. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus calls his followers to come into the house of the Lord, and serve him faithfully, and serve all those whom he has invited to the table
 - b. And at the end of the day, when we are tired and worn out after doing all that we have been commanded, Jesus expects US to say,
 - i. "We are unworthy bond-slaves... we have only done that which we were BOUND to do"
 - 1. Now, let's be honest...
 - a. That sounds like a pretty formal and heartless response on the surface, doesn't it?
 - i. And you could certainly approach it in that way
 - 1. You could say, "Jesus, I am only following all of your commands because that is what I am MORALLY bound to do"
 - a. If I don't follow you and your commands, well, then everyone will look at me in as a disobedient and ungrateful servant
 - i. So I'll obey you out of a moral obligation to do so
 - 2. Or you could say, "Jesus, I'm only following all of your commands because that is what I'm LEGALLY bound to do"
 - a. If I don't follow you and your commands, well, then I'll fall under your discipline and get lightning-bolted for my disobedience
 - i. So I'll obey you because that's what THE LAW tells me to do
 - b. We could respond in that way...
 - i. But what that kind of response shows us, is that we do not truly understand the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ!
- c. You see, the Gospel says that we are ALL a bunch of sinful people
 - i. That doesn't mean that we just make a few bad decisions every now and then, or that we occasionally do the wrong thing
 - 1. It means that we are run through and through with an innate rebellion against the God who has created us
 - a. In Romans chapter 1, the Apostle Paul tells us that what can be known about God is plain to see in everything that He has made...
 - i. We can see His loveliness in the beauty of the green grass and the flowers of the field...
 - ii. We can see His faithfulness in the rising and setting of the sun...
 - iii. We can see His love and care and provision in the seasons that come with every passing year...
 - iv. We can see His glory through the expanse of the universe

- b. Yet, even though we can see all of these wonderful things about our Creator...
 - i. We still choose to reject Him
 - 1. In our hearts, we'd rather worship what WE want to worship
 - 2. Ultimately, we'd rather worship OURSELVES
 - c. And so, we who have been made in the image of God, CHOOSE to live contrary to our nature,
 - i. And therefore, we have been given over to all sorts of dishonorable passions
 - 1. This isn't a statement against all of the Hitler's or the Nero's or the Al-Chaida's out there in the world
 - a. Paul says that this is ALL of humanity
 - ii. We are all sons and daughters of Adam
 - 1. And when Adam fell into sin in the Garden, we ALL fell into sin
 - a. Paul writes in Romans 5:12 that
 - i. *12... just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because ALL sinned*
 - b. In verse 18, Paul will say that we ALL stand condemned
 - i. And we can't point the blame back on Adam and Eve
 - 1. They just did exactly what we would have done if we had been in their position
 - c. For Romans 3:23 says that ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- d. Friends, what this means is that we have ALL racked up a debt against God that we are absolutely incapable of paying!
 - i. God doesn't have a checklist up in heaven where He is keeping a tally of all your good works
 - 1. Well, they made it to church three out of four weeks this month... not too bad
 - 2. They didn't quite get the full ten percent of the tithe in last month, but they at least got to 7.4%
 - 3. They did give \$5 to that homeless guy on the corner last week
 - a. Looks like they're making good progress on paying down their debt against Me... maybe there's hope for them yet!
 - i. Friends, let me remove that hope from your mind
 - 1. For CENTURIES, the people of ancient Israel sacrificed COUNTLESS numbers of bulls and goats and sheep to atone for their sins
 - 2. They tried REALLY hard to keep the Sabbaths, and to follow all of the religious festivals that God commanded
 - 3. They strove for MANY years to uphold all of the dietary laws, all of the ceremonial laws, all of the civil and moral laws of God
 - b. And where do the people of Israel stand today?
 - i. The vast majority of them have been scattered into the nations throughout the world
 - ii. A small remnant has returned to Jerusalem as of only about 75 years ago
 - 1. But they have no Temple
 - 2. Their worship of God is nominal at best
 - 3. And they are surrounded by their enemies

- iii. Despite CENTURIES of striving, they repeatedly fell short of the glory of God
 - c. If we are to learn anything from the people of Israel today, may we learn this one biblical reality...
 - i. We will NEVER be able to amass enough good works to satisfy the debt against God that our sin has accrued... NEVER
 - ii. Therefore, because God is a JUST God, He has EVERY RIGHT to leave us in our sin
 - 1. He has EVERY RIGHT to leave us to our condemnation
 - 2. He has EVERY RIGHT to sentence us to death
 - a. For we ALL stand as His enemy
 - b. And we ALL are absolutely incapable of doing anything about that on our own
- e. But the Gospel reminds us that, while our God is indeed a JUST God, He is also a MERCIFUL God
 - i. He is also a GRACIOUS God
 - 1. And He is also a LOVING God
 - ii. So what did this merciful and gracious and loving God do, in spite of our sin and rebellion against Him?
 - 1. John 3:16...
 - a. *¹⁶... God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - a. *²¹For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God.*
 - 3. Ephesians 2:4-5
 - a. *⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ*
 - 4. Romans 5:8-9
 - a. *⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*
- f. Brothers and sisters, each of us owe a debt that we can NEVER pay to the One who has created us
 - i. Because of that debt, God has EVERY RIGHT to pour out His wrath upon each and every one of us
 - 1. The prophet Habakkuk was right to pray to the Lord in Habakkuk 3:2,
 - a. *²O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.*
 - ii. In His wrath, God has indeed remembered mercy
 - 1. In His love, God has sent His Son to be the ONLY sacrifice that is capable of freeing us from the debt that we owed
 - a. While we were still sinners, Christ died... FOR US
 - i. And through the justification that was secured by the blood of Christ, we can now be saved from the wrath of God
 - 2. Not by returning to a system of works and trying to earn our freedom through our own merit and our own strength
 - a. But by believing in Jesus, with our whole hearts
 - i. Believing that his blood ALONE was sufficient to secure our forgiveness

- ii. Believing that his death ALONE was enough to make us righteous before God
 - iii. Believing that his sacrifice ALONE was enough to satisfy the wrath of God
 - iii. We believe in the all-encompassing sufficiency of Jesus Christ
 - 1. AND, we surrender EVERYTHING to him as our King!
 - a. You see, friends, a legally binding agreement has been made on your behalf
 - i. From our limited, human perspective, that agreement is made when we place our faith in Jesus Christ
 - 1. When we truly confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord...
 - a. And we truly believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead...
 - i. Then the Scriptures promise you WILL be saved
 - b. And so I encourage each of us who are here this morning, if that is not the story of YOUR life, then maybe today is the day to change that
 - i. Maybe today is the day when you finally realize the debt that has mounted up against your Creator because of your sin
 - ii. Maybe today is the day when you finally realize that there is absolutely NOTHING you can do in your own strength to make that debt go away
 - iii. Maybe today is the day when you will TRULY surrender your life to Jesus Christ, both as Savior AND as LORD
 - 1. This is the agreement that we willingly come under when we become followers of Jesus
 - a. Because of the sacrifice that he has paid on our behalf, we now choose to become his bond-slave, and we JOYFULLY enter into the service of our King
 - c. This is how it all comes to pass from the HUMAN perspective
 - g. But the Scriptures reveal to us that there is indeed something much grander, much more marvelous happening in the realm of the eternal and the spiritual
 - i. You see, back in the days of the Roman Empire, the vast majority of bond-slaves had no say in their role as bond-slaves
 - 1. Many of these bond-slaves would have been men and women captured during various wars or conquests
 - 2. Others would have been criminals who had been sentenced to the life of a bond-slave
 - 3. Others might have been those who were deeply in debt financially
 - 4. MANY were simply children who had been born to parents who were bond-slaves
 - a. At the very foundation of who they were, these bond-slaves had no freedom of will whatsoever
 - i. They were at the mercy of whoever owned them
 - ii. And Paul says in Romans 6 that that is who WE are today
 - 1. In Romans 6:16, Paul says that we were ALL once slaves to sin
 - a. Because of the self-centered desires that resided in our hearts, we presented our members as “slaves to impurity...”
 - i. As slaves to lawlessness, which only lead to more lawlessness
 - ii. We were ALL bound up in chains, my friends, and our master was our sin

1. We were like the defeated enemies living as bond-slaves in the Roman Empire, only our oppressor was the Empire of Satan
 2. We were like the criminals living as bond-slaves, only our wicked master was the desires of this world
 3. We were like the children born into slavery, only our ruthless taskmaster was our very own flesh
- b. We were slaves to sin
- iii. But just listen to these incredible words of Revelation chapter 5
1. As the Apostle John looks into the heavens, and he sees a scroll being held out that no one is able to open, he began to weep loudly in mourning and sorrow
 - a. But one of the elders said to John in verse 5,
 - i. *“Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”*
 2. And then all the four creatures and the twenty-four elders in the throne room of heaven all fell down before the Lamb – before Jesus, and they sang this song...
 - a. *⁹“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”*
- iv. Brothers and sisters, let the weight of this sink in this morning
1. By the blood of Jesus, you have been ransomed from your slavery to sin
 - a. HE has purchased you
 - b. HE has paid the debt to the Father that you could not pay
 - c. HE has signed the legal document that has freed you from your shackles, AND that has saved you from the condemnation of the wrath of God
 - i. He has signed this Covenant with his blood
 1. And therefore, you now belong TO HIM
- v. THIS is the biblical reality of what is going on in the heavenlies, my friends...
1. Jesus IS King
 - a. He IS the one who has bought you
 - i. In the midst of your sin... in the midst of your rebellion... in the midst of you being an enemy of his Father
 - b. Jesus went to the cross, and by HIS blood, YOU have now become his bond-slave
 - i. He has the right to command us to whatever His Father desires
 - ii. And he has the right to hear from each one of us our JOYFULL response,
 1. ‘We are unworthy servants; may we only do that which we are BOUND to do!’
 2. And here is the glorious reality as well, friends...
 - a. When we have TRULY been purchased by the blood of Jesus...
 - b. When we have TRULY been freed from the shackles of sin and entered into the bond-service of our King...
 - c. When we TRULY understand the Gospel and all that has been given to us in the love and grace and mercy of God...
 - i. It is then that we begin to realize that there is incredible FREEDOM found in the life of a bond-servant of Christ

- vi. I love the last verse of the section of Psalm 119 that we heard at the beginning of the service this morning...
 - 1. *"I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!"*
 - a. Brothers and sisters in Christ, you have been given a NEW heart in him
 - b. And when we begin to exercise that new heart, we will find that we can run this race... not just out of duty and obligation...
 - i. But with great JOY and FREEDOM as well
 - 2. The path to true happiness and blessing does not lie in our unfettered freedom, friends
 - a. Happiness and freedom comes when we embrace the fact that we are simply unworthy servants, who have been given the incredible privilege of being bond-slaves in the house of the one who purchased us by his own blood!