

Father God, we do appreciate this place. You have given it to us. You gave it to people long ago to establish your presence here in this town, and that has been carried on through the generations. And here we are, these generations, representing you as your children in this place, in this community and beyond. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve. We are grateful for what you did so long ago, what you do every single day in our lives. And we are grateful for the promises upon which we stand for our future. Lord, we ask you to take your place as the pastor and the teacher of this church and the church universal this day. May your light shine through, may your power shine through in your word, in prayer, and in song. In Jesus' mighty name, amen. The kingdom of God. Today is about the kingdom of God. Actually, a lot of the section of Luke that we are focusing on leading up to Easter is about the kingdom of God, the various aspects of the kingdom of God, from the faith that an individual person has to what the kingdom of God, maybe he has these parables of what the kingdom of God is like on earth, and the, if you will, type of person is going to be affected. Now, we know that every human being, indeed all of creation, is going to be affected by the redemption, because all of creation and every human being was affected by the fall. But these teachings of Jesus are interesting in that he specifically, again, along the lines of the Beatitudes, begins to speak of individuals and what life will be like when he returns. You know, that's very practical for you and I, because as I look out upon here, I don't see kings and queens and presidents and, you know, billionaire CEOs. No offense. We're people. We are the people that he is speaking of in 15, 16, 17, 18, and he's trying to get across the message that it is when, that we, as the, shall we say, average follower of Christ, what do we need to know, not only to get into and stay in the kingdom of God, but what is it going to be like on the day of the Lord's return? Now we understand that this is leading up to his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, and then that will, he will return again. So, let's begin Luke 17 with that in mind. Now if you can remember 15 and 16, and the ideas about the kingdom of God that were given out then, and the various focuses that we had, I guess it's foci, that we had over the past few weeks, they're designed to build upon one another. And 17 ends with Jesus talking about the kingdom of God, and 18 ends with what it's going to be like when the son of Mary turns as well. It seems to be a point of emphasis. And so we should probably pay attention. The first 10 verses. One day Jesus said to his disciples, "There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting?" So by negative example, you're learning who you should not be. It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin. And in fact it can be interpreted as little ones, children. It can be also interpreted using the word that Jesus often uses for his disciples, little things. People who are young in their faith as well as young physically, if that makes sense. So I've got a new Christian and they're asking me questions and I'm like, "Oh no, not you." And I lead them astray. That's the same meaning as taking a child, the mind of a child and leading them astray. And it would be better for the one who is doing that to just be dumped in the bottom of the lake with a millstone tied around their neck because Jesus has no mercy for twisting and turning the word of God and leading people into hell. He has us, that is, the sin. So watch yourselves. If another believer, just as I mentioned, sins, rebuke that person. If there is repentance, forgive. That even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive. People don't like that. And you say, "Well, this person obviously then is just playing me. They know I will forgive them, so they act up and then I forgive them." And that's not right, Jesus. When you're God, when you are God, you can judge that person's heart. Until then, you better let God be God and do what He commands you to do. And that's the answer to that question. I don't like it either. And even if I completely suspect that an individual is just playing that game, I did not create that individual. I do not know that individual's soul and their intent. I do not know their heart. God does, and He has asked me to forgive and to be that representative of forgiveness. So the apostles said to the Lord, "Show us how to increase our faith." The Lord answered, "If you have faith, even as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'May you be uprooted and be planted in the sea and it would obey you, when a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of

sheep.'" Now these two go together very uniquely. That's the old mustard seed saying, "If you invade the sides of a mustard seed, that's a bit of the faith that the Lord can provide in His pureness and His holiness." When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, "Come in and eat with me?" "No," he says, "Prepare my meal. Put on your apron and serve me while I eat. Then you can eat later." And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not. In the same way, when you obey me, you should say, "We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty." That is right on the heels of instructing about faith and the believer and the investor in the kingdom of God. And Jesus immediately tells you, as we learned above, "He is God, you are not." This is a difficult -- this is where repentance -- we talked about that yesterday in our study day -- why is the first word out of the mouth of Jesus "repent"? Because it's the hardest thing for human beings to do. Your pride, your self-image, everything that you think about self, you're going to turn around and say, "I'm sorry for who I am. I'm sorry for the way I'm leading my life now." That's hard for a human being who worships themselves, mostly. Repentance is the key to the mouth. And so even though he says, "Oh, if you have the faith, the sight for mustard seed, you can move mountains," he says, "Also remember, I am sovereign God and you have been created to worship me and carry through my will on earth." People are, again, "Well, if that's the case, I don't want anything to do with God because he doesn't know how awesome I am." I can't help you with that mindset. That is a stronghold in your own brain and heart that you're going to have to deal with. But when we submit ourselves to our holy God, we are submitting ourselves. And so do you want praise? We're going to sing some beautiful songs here. And we pray that they -- what we say, "Bless the Lord," that he says, "Oh, worship, yes." But are we going to stand around and wait for the Lord to applaud our wonderful talent and how awesome we are and thank us for doing what he commands us to do? We shouldn't. Maybe you want that in your heart, but that is not scriptural. If you were with us on the live streams this week, if you read the Church Channel weekly, it's all been about Luke 17, various aspects of that. And my intention with doing large swaths of scripture throughout this season is to entice you to go back and read it. If what I said earlier about the elements of chapter 13, 14, 15, 16, and how they were brought to life individually, and now they're going to culminate right now as Jesus speaks of the second coming, if that intrigues you, it is my hope that you'll read that again. I'm sneaky that way. I want you to be a little bit "what?" and go back and read and discover and look at, eliminate the chapter and headings, and read the scriptures as they link one to the other. And the teachings link one to the other. There's a point and a purpose, not just for each little parable or story or teaching, but there's a point and a purpose as to how God's Holy Spirit put this whole thing together. And you can see it as it rises in these peaks, and then there's another second, and it rises to the peak, culminating, of course, in the crucifixion and the resurrection. Luke 17 is a passage that is oft preached. I have often preached it myself. And it is a wonderful story that, if you read, has a very simple meaning and heart, but let's take a look at a different aspect of it. Luke 17, beginning with verse 11, "As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, crying out, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' He looked at them and said, 'Go show yourselves to the priests!' And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, 'Praise God!' He fell to the ground at Jesus, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, 'Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?' And Jesus said to the man, 'Stand up and go. Your faith has healed him.'" There's a couple of things going on here, the first of which is that, as was mentioned before, this is one of the most unique miracles that Jesus performs because he simply thinks it. Oftentimes in performing a miracle, he'll lay a hand. One time he makes mud. Other times people touch him. He does a variety of different things, even using a commanding voice. "Come out of him!" And here, the men are at a distance. They are marginalized. They are unclean. Not to mention that we know at least one of them is a hated Samaritan, which is oft used in Scripture to demonstrate the least among us, the most unlovable among us, the enemy among us. And they cry out to him, and here's that word,

"Master." So if you don't think that this teaching is linked to the first teaching, it's linked by that word, "Master." Understanding that they are not God, understanding that they are unworthy, not only because they are human creations, but because the state of their being is dirty, it's unclean, it's in the margin. They don't belong anywhere close to him. Yet they say, beatitude number one, "Master." They know their need for a savior. So when we read this, the impact of the people and what they say should really hit us. Because as the Christian church goes out today, there are lots and lots of Samaritans, if you will. You can take category after category after category of individuals whom we would very much agree with and be very copacetic with, and there are groups and groups and groups and groups of individuals inside Christendom and outside Christendom that we certainly wouldn't. There are lots of Samaritans out there. Do we just shut down? I don't like this person. This person is on a different country. Whatever the case may be, do we just shut down? This person is professing a false religion. This person is professing antagonistic atheism. Do I just shut down? You're standing in front of a person who is in desperate need of a savior. What do you think the answer is? The Lord has placed you in front of a person who is in desperate need of a savior. You may be, say it, the only Bible that that individual ever reads. You are representative of God's Holy Spirit and His will, and His will has brought you there. And it's not that you just start whacking that person over the head with the Bible, and now that I've gotten your attention, let me tell you, it is the fact that you are simply the man or the woman that God made you to be in front of that person. And if a conversation is invited, then a conversation can be had. And if it's not, if the heart is too hard, if the neck is too stiff, and there's too much going on, then so be it. What you have done as you were commanded. And that's where the important part is. We also recognize, as we sang in the songs, and it's just a beautiful song selection, the first two about God's majesty, how great thou art, His sovereignty over all, and the third is about the human, "Oh, how I love Jesus." It's exactly what we're talking about today. And you can submit yourself and you can sing, "Oh, how I love Jesus," but you better remember that you're not Jesus. You can sing, "How great thou art, oh, Lord, my God, how great thou art," but you better remember in your prideful heart that you are not God. And that's what it's all about today. And as we serve Him, as we bring out His word and pour it forth, as we glorify Him in song and in prayer, we understand our role and that the faith that He gives us is magnificent, and the power of His Holy Spirit within us is the very power that raised Christ from the dead. And He is sovereign over all. So no, when we see that Samaritan in our lives, we can't simply think and heal. That would be wonderful. Somebody of every lost person on earth would just be going, "Ooh, ooh, no." We can't do that. And part of the point of this demonstration is He can. He can. And part of the point of this demonstration is that these people knew their desperate need for a Savior, Beatitude Number One. And the third part of this is that nine of them were perfectly satisfied when they got what they wanted. It doesn't say that Jesus gave them leprosy back. They were healed and they went about their merry way. They never recognized again when they got what they wanted, when they got their heart's desire, they never laid that at the feet of Jesus and said, "Thank you." Which is interesting because you're crying out for your Master's health, and then He helps you, and you don't even say, "Thank you." Oh, wait. I believe every one of us in the sanctuary today has probably done that to another person. You don't have to raise your hand. I will. So it's not really that unusual, but it is an incredible point that Jesus is making. Bless us, Lord, we pray. We talked about this morning that I do believe that Jesus loves this church. All of those things are amazing, and we should get on our knees and thank Him for the opportunity to gather together in corporate worship and sing and be in His Word, and speak in fellowship with one another, care for one another. Thank Him for the opportunity. Thank Him for the power of His Holy Spirit that binds us together, that regardless if I know you very well or I don't know you very well, if you are a son or a daughter of the Most High, I call you brother. I call you sister. That's incredible. That's powerful. And if we take that for granted and say, "Wow, this church is just like God. We're going to do the work that we do," we're missing the mark. We are sinning. In the devotional, I ask that simple question that is often preached. Are you one of the nine, or are you the one? And that is your "get in front of the mirror" question for the day. Think of your prayers, think of your prayer life, think of the life that you have spent with

Jesus Christ. Are you the one? Do you submit yourself, even in the blessings of the Lord and in the power of His Holy Spirit, do you submit yourself to Him each and every day, or more often than not, as often as not? You just go about your merry way. You say, "Thank you for this wonderful day, Lord. Thank you for the blessings that we receive." And that's that. If that. Good stuff in here. It's power of path. These folks know who the Master is, do you? These folks then cry out to the Master, do you? And one of these folks comes back and thanks the Master, do you? The final piece is when Jesus then says He switches it from Him performing the miracle, He thinks and they are healed. What does He say for the last person that comes and thanks Him? "Go, your faith has healed you." There's something about this relationship in Shavuot both ways. See what I'm saying? He says, "Go, your faith has healed you." I, in my sovereignty and in my grace and in my mercy, whether they're going to thank me or not, whether they care or not, whether they used me in life. Oh, wait. That refers back to that person who keeps sinning and that we keep forgiving. Whether they tried to play me or not, I healed them. I chose to heal them and I healed them. But you, your faith has set you free. Your faith. That's the last indicator in this passage. That there is a strong relationship to be built with God through Jesus Christ. Your faith. The faith of a mustard seed, if you will. You see all of the interrelations, of the words that are being used, the stories that are being told, the point and the purpose of what He's bringing to His people. My heart is full as it usually is. I look out and I hear the babies fussing. I see the children playing. I have so many different, I have. I am selfish that way. I see so many different generations here worshiping together, teaching one another. Families coming up and sharing music together. Men coming up to help lead the songs. My heart is full. When I look into scripture and I read the letters of Paul and we seek to follow God's will for what church is and what it looks like and how it's done, we've chosen to stay on that path. And that makes me very happy. And what I mean by that is we've chosen to not just pick something out of the air and this is the carbon copy of a church down the street. We continually are searching the scriptures. What should we do next? What should it look like? How can we benefit every generation? And that is just something that is, that's on you. You could easily not want that. You could easily want a cookie-cutter situation. And you seem by example that you are all welcome what gifts you may have to share with the church. Maybe there are poets among us who would like to write and read a poem. Maybe there are Hindu musicians out there. Maybe there are people that have been like, "I'm thinking about that new song, Singers, but I've been thinking about it for over a year now." Whatever the case may be, you have incredible examples of individuals and there is no safer place you will ever be to demonstrate and share the gifts that God gives you than among your family. It's just a beautiful, beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing. So we're going to talk about the culmination of what really is chapter 15 and 16 and 17. And now, and then we're going to bounce around a little bit again next week in chapter 18 and end kind of in the same place. And this is what I meant in the beginning when I said, "When Jesus is making such a point over this, then we had better pay attention to it." And so you'll see this week and next a little bit of the same pattern, but right on the heels of a discussion of faith, right on the heels of a discussion of master and servant, right on the heels of being a grateful people instead of a people who just says, "Wow, cool," and moves on with their lives, he breaks into this discussion, this teaching, of what it will be like when the Son of Man returns. One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will the kingdom of God come?" And, I've got one line in, that's pretty good for me. But this, I just want to point out, because you know what a geek I am with scripture, I'm telling you, chapter and verse, just read through. When you read a line like, "One day the Pharisees asked Jesus will come, when will the kingdom of God come?" It can put in your mind a framework that the other teachings aren't related to this. That this is a different day over here, and it's a completely different subject, and this is this, and that is that. And you can break it down even further into those individual things that Bibles are made of. So, just because it says, "One day the Pharisees asked Jesus," God's Holy Spirit has put it in this sequence for a reason. And when we look at what comes before it and then what comes after it, it really explodes this scripture. And that is how scripture is meant to work, because you can basically take any aspect of scripture, look at what comes before it and what comes after it, and all of a sudden, that passage that you're reading today,

explodes to life, because it's meant to be a continuum. So that phrasing there, that sentence, can create a framework in your head that this is something completely different, and it's not. So that's the point that I want to make. Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God can't be detected by visible signs. You won't be able to say, 'Here it is,' or 'It's over there,' for the kingdom of God is already among you." It's a powerful statement. Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will no longer see the day, but you will long to see the day when the Son of Man returns, but you won't see it." People will tell you, "Look, there's the Son of Man," or "Here He is," but don't go out and follow them, for as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so it will be on the days when the Son of Man comes. But first the Son of Man must suffer terribly and be rejected by this generation." So he's telling them that there will be a day when not necessarily them, but followers of Jesus Christ will long for the return of the Son of Man. Right? Let's look around. You know what I'm saying? The day is coming when you're thinking, "What's going on here?" We're going to read these things that will be going on. We have people all over the place saying, "Look over here. This is the truth. Look over there. This is the truth. Look under here. This is the truth." That can't be the truth because it's exclusive. This can't be the truth because... it's all over the place, these huge points of confusion that are intended solely by Satan. Remember I said Jesus loves this, Satan hates it. Jesus is all about the Word of God. He is the law God. Satan hates the Word of God. And if he can make you miss the point and the teaching of the Word of God by a mile or by a millimeter, he doesn't care as long as you miss it. Look over here. Look over there. Look in Scripture here. Let me rewrite a Bible to fit my own social narrative. It's done all the time. So we see these things occurring. And the longing for the return of the Son of Man is growing and growing. Not necessarily among those who are worshipping themselves. They don't want that to end. But among the Orthodox, among the Christians who are submitted to Christ, we read the words of Scripture that say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come." And he makes the point of the immediate prophecy that first he must suffer and die. When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings. Right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all. Now you may be thinking, "Wicked wicked wicked." But that's not really the indication here. Yes, we know that's why God did it. But the point is actually people were just going about their day, doing what they do, how they do it, right up to the point when the floods came. Average people. There's not a mention here of how any great king tried to stop any great movement of God or nothing like that. There were banquets and there were weddings and there was day in and there was day out. And the people lived their wicked lives under the judgment of God and then it happened. So Jesus is saying, "It's going to be like that." And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business, eating, drinking, buying, selling, farming, building, until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Yes, it will be business as usual right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, a person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. A person out in the field must not return home. Remember what happened to Lot's life. If you cling to your life, you will lose it. And if you let your life go, you will gain it, save it. That night, two people will be asleep in one bed. One will be taken in the other left. Two women will be grinding flour together at the mill. One will be taken in the other left. "Where will this happen, Lord?" the disciples asked. Jesus replied, "Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near." The point that he is making, and there is a lot of stuff in apocalyptic literature and the revealing of the end time, and there is a lot of stuff about blood moons and signs and wonders and things of that nature, that's not the point that he's making here. The point that he's making here, my brothers and sisters, is to stay faithful. The point that he's making here is to be the bridesmaids, if you will, who are fully prepared to wait upon the Lord and enter the banquet hall. The point that he's making here is that if you are, and you do persevere to the end, stay with me, you will be saved. He's bringing that out because he's really speaking of the average person living their life on the average day. Nobody knows the time or the day. That's making clear in Scripture. So all of those internet preachers, and they've got all of their numerology,

and they've got all of their signs and wonders, turn them off. Scripture is very clear about that. Scripture is also very clear about the fact that his church will be saved. His bride will be saved. The apocalyptic literature of Revelation is very clear that the gates will close and the saved will be inside of them and the unsaved will be outside of them. These are made very clear to us. So just as you're called to be the Word of God, if you will, the Spirit of God, if you will, in front of that Samaritan you're facing down this week, the reason is that you're calling. And you're called to be that follower of Christ because his return may happen at any time, and how are you going to explain the fact that you hated that person so much that you wouldn't even share the life of Christ with them? It's not a good look, as they say today. Now, again, standing on a milk box in the middle of Carlisle with a megaphone, that may not be your thing. Others may be called to that street evangelism and just putting it all out there. It's not my thing, but what I do try to be very intentional about is looking in the mirror and determining whether I'm one of the nine or whether I'm the one and then walking forward like that and trying to be very intentional about the people that I meet and the things that I say and the way that I portray myself. We can all do that, and you never know. There are teachers and ex-teachers and people who have worked with people. You just don't know when something you do, something you say, a way that you behave, a way that you treat somebody will stick with them forever. And that may be the thing that you walk away from not even knowing you've done that changes their life forever. You know why? Because you're not God. You're serving God. You do what you're called to do and trust that He will do what He promises to do and life on earth for you will be better. Jesus in this passage and leading up to this passage is talking about the common, if you will, kind of language, the average person, the regular person and their faith, the regular person and their behavior, the regular person and the way they worship and they think of worship, the regular person and how they think of themselves. The servant or master, the regular person and how they think of God, a tool to be used. I've done so great. Now give me my blessings or Lord and Master of all. I am your servant. So when you read through and that's what I hope. I hope that this afternoon or of course the week you're like, now I'm curious because I remember the service from the past couple of weeks, but I really want to see how this is all related and you whip out your Bibles and you start at least around 15, but we started at 13 and read through to this. And understand that He is Jesus. I won't say desperately, but He is very, very intentionally trying to speak into the life of anyone who would choose to follow Him. People like you and me. Because when the time comes, it comes. And then when you do that, you'll really, really understand next week's chapter 18. Amen. Are you one of the nine? Are you the one? It all really does come down to that. Father, we thank you for your word today. We thank you for the power of your Holy Spirit that brought forth your word and your teaching. I am your vessel, Lord, and we are your vessels, Lord. May we live every moment as if we are in front of that Samaritan. How will we behave as you call us to be your disciples? How will we treat them, Lord? Inspire us. How will we treat you, Lord? Inspire us. Teach us. Grow us. For we long for the day of your return. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.