

Luke 17: 1 – 10

There is no clipboard, facebook or twitter, but the information has to be gathered and stored. The time is growing shorter for Jesus. He is journeying on to the inevitable end awaiting him at Jerusalem. Every opportunity must be taken to ensure the legacy of his teaching is not lost or forgotten.

I'm not sure how the information we have in the Gospels was collected. But out of all that Jesus said and did, we have this record, gathered and stored in people's memories, which someone like Luke assembles and puts together.

We have in this morning's Gospel three snippets which I imagine were given and remembered as the disciples sweated along the rough and dusty tracks of Palestine.

In Jesus' mind, they would at least have been regarded as essential to the life style of would-be disciples.

The first snippet - :3 "If your brotheryou must forgive him." That is **Keep on forgiving**

Have you ever faced a situation in which you find yourself unable to forgive? We often see people interviewed on TV after a crime or serious accident, who in their grief or anger understandably say "I can never forgive."....

I've often wondered myself what kind of situation I would find the hardest to forgive someone. I suppose for me coming to terms with a drunk driver who has maimed or caused the death of one of my family would be really difficult.

We occasionally see a person who publically says they forgive, and it makes an impression both on the interviewer and the TV viewer. Often this is out of the depths of the Christian Faith, and it makes an impact because this is not the way people normally respond

The whole basis and nature of forgiveness is ofcourse

enshrined in the Lord's Prayer where forgiveness is conditional on what God has already given to us as centred in the Cross. So our plea is "forgive us our sins"

Here then is the first of these snippets **Keep on forgiving.**

The second snippet is one related to the apostles request for greater faith Jesus said :6 "If you had the faith of a mustard seedit would obey you."

The language here is typically middle eastern. Rooting up a tree and having it relocated in the sea is an impossible and pointless task. But we need to remember that such exaggeration was part and parcel of the eastern language and thought forms. (Something like the illustration that Jesus gives of the camel passing through the eye of a needle)

What is implied here is the vast power of faith. As someone has observed, its not so much faith in God that's required, as faith in a Great God.

There's an interesting comparison made between the mustard seed and its size and the Mulberry tree. The Jewish Rabbis believed the roots of these trees could go on functioning and remaining firm for 600yrs. So removing it would be very difficult indeed.

I like this thought – **"Faith is like a window through which you can see something. What matters is not whether the window is six inches or six feet high; what matters is the God that your faith is looking upon. If it is the creator God, the God active in Jesus and the Spirit, then the tiniest peep hole of a window will give you access to power that you never dreamed of."** Wright Luke for everyone p204

One of the liberating features of faith that I have increasingly realised over the years is that faith doesn't provide all the answers to either belief or life. It insists on the need to risk, leaving behind all the safety, and security, and scorns the need of guarantees, as Jesus required of Peter when asking him to step out of the boat onto the waters of Galilee.

The third snippet - :7- 10 That is **Keep on serving**
This little parable about a man and his servants, would have been understood as typical of the way things applied in those days. The servant had to toil on, even when he or she had completed the day's work.

It is a reminder that we have no claim on God. God isn't in our debt. Yet how often we either think or say –

**I have done all this
I've given generously of my time and**

money

**I've worked so hard and yet look
how my life has turned out.**

It's as though having laboured in the heat of the day and through many years, we have built up credit which will be a safeguard against life's uncertainties. The reality of course is that all genuine service is done out of gratitude which has no pay back.

There is a famous story about a man who wrote a book with the title "Humility and how I achieved it", which is almost as self contradictory as in Jesus' world referring to 'the good Samaritan'. It is humility that I think links these three snippets together. The three short sayings which Luke records have this common thread. They point towards the humility which all true servants of Jesus must learn, and especially in relation to **forgiveness, faith and service.**