Luke 17:1-19

Millstones and Milestones
My question this morning is—

- How do you define Spiritual Maturity?
- What are some of the milestones?
Evidence of Spiritual Maturity

- Counting as a loss everything the world may offer in comparison with knowing and being known by Christ (Phil 3:7).

- Loving the Redeemer and Giver of gifts - more than the gifts (1 Pet. 1:7-8).

- Possessing a heart that looks and longs for evidences of grace rather than always self-righteously looking at the faults in the lives of others who are in Christ (Gal. 6:1).
Evidence of Spiritual Maturity

- Considering the needs of others as being more important than themselves (Phil. 2:3).
- The ability to graciously respond to one who may be in error (2 Tim. 2:24-25).
- It is evidenced by seeking to ‘wash others feet’ (John 13:14)
- It is evidenced by child-like (not childish) faith in the Redeemer (Mark 10:14)
Evidence of Spiritual Maturity

- It is evidenced by a heart that is truly broken over sin. (Ps. 51:17)

- It is evidenced by an abiding love for the Church, the bride of Christ (1 Pet 1:22; Eph. 5:32)

- It is evidenced by an attitude that seeks obedience to Christ in ALL things (2 Cor. 5:14)

- A life defined by having love for those who do not love us back (Lk. 6:30-36).
Evidence of Spiritual Maturity

- A life defined by not seeking retribution for those that hurt us (1 Pet 2:13-24)

- It is evidenced by acts of mercy, forgiveness, selfless service, selfless giving (2 Cor. 8:3-5)

- It is evidenced by a heart of sincere gratitude and love for all that God has done for us and through us (Heb. 12:28-29).
Forgiveness and Gratitude.

- Two evidences of a Maturing Heart are:
  1) The ability to truly forgive others
  2) The honesty and humility to express genuine gratitude for His grace

- BOTH will require FAITH.

- BOTH will require MATURITY.

- And BOTH will require a clear understanding of the MERCIES of God. For as Jesus said in Lk. 7:37 – “Those who have been forgiven much, love much.”
Ever since *Luke 9:51* when Jesus “resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem, ” The Savior has been warning the Pharisees and their followers to guard against *unbelief*- found in a dead religion - a religion devoid of *relationship* with Him (*Luke 11:37-54)*.

He has warned his disciples NOT to fear man - rather to fear of God (*Luke 12:1-12*), warning them (and us) against all forms of materialism, and urging them instead to be rich toward God (*Luke 12:13-21*).
In chapters 13-14, Jesus begins to define His Kingdom as a Kingdom of Grace (Lk 13:10-17) one which begins humbly and grows rapidly to embrace the nations (Lk 13:18-21).

He references it as a Kingdom of Repentance with a strict deadline of dire consequences if one rejects His teachings (Lk 13:22-35).
But also as a Kingdom of Redemption, wherein God the Father Himself seeks the lost (Lk 15:1-10) and in which the angels rejoice over “just one soul who repents” (Luke 15:11-35).
In Chapter 16, that the Lord encourages us to be wise and use our blessings shrewdly (Lk 16:1-12).

He then warns us that it will be the humbled in this life, the poor but faithful obedient- who will inherit the grand reward of eternal rest with God,

BUT as to the selfish and the proud of this world – they will spend eternity in a Hell of their own making (Lk 16:19-31).

A Hell in which there is no comfort, no hope, and no escape.
Millstone: How important it is not to cause others to sin (Lk 17:1-2)

Milestone: How important it is to be truly thankful for the gift of God’s cleansing (Lk 17:11-19)...

“Loving the Redeemer and Giver of gifts – even more than the gifts.” (1 Pet. 1:7-8).
In Luke 17:1-2 – the situation is one in which a “little one” or young novice in the faith is seriously discouraged or even led astray from the Faith by the actions of another individual.
We do have very real responsibility to consider the needs of others as being more important than ourselves as Paul said in (Phil. 2:3).

And we should live a life in which mercy, forgiveness, selfless service, selfless giving are our sincere concern (2 Cor. 8:3-5)
Jesus said, “It would be better for him that a millstone be hung around his neck and he was thrown into the sea, then that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble.”

Obviously, this would cause the arrogant or deliberate man to drown, to die…
Clear message- Discouraging the faith of a new or young disciple is a CAPITAL OFFENSE!

Barnes states that this very punishment was performed by the Greeks, Syrians, and the Romans, and that the sin he referred to was causing a young Christian to sin, is SUCH a serious sin, and it cannot be taken lightly in the Church.

Certainly the Lord is not prescribing the actual death penalty as punishment for this sin, but rather is showing how wicked this sin really is.
Serious Issue!

- [So then Jesus faithfully adds] – (Lk. 17:3)
  "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."

- Jesus *is* saying that sin must be addressed.

- Jesus *is* saying that we MUST rebuke the sinful, FOR THEIR SALVATION!
“Rebuke”

- **epitimao** (*ep-ee-tee-mah*-o); to censure or admonish; by implication, forbid. (KJV--(straitly) charge, rebuke.)

- Used 29 times in the N.T.

- *A stern warning!*
Jesus *is* actually challenging us to care *enough* for someone to confront them.

If that loving information (rebuke) *brings repentance* and a *request for forgiveness*, that one is to be *forgiven*, no matter how many times the offender asks.
Mercy

- **Mt. 18:21-22** – “Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? **Up to seven times**?“ Jesus responding to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to **seventy times seven**.

- **Luke 17:4** – "And if he sins against you **seven times a day**, and returns to you **seven times**, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."
Forgiveness as Jesus defines it, **is the responsibility of every Christian and is an essential element in a process of reconciliation.**

- It’s sign of **maturity.** It’s **milestone** of faith.
Christ’s Flow-Chart

- Sin –
  - Rebuke –
    - Repentance –
      - Forgivenes!
In any case – as Christians we are ALL called “to live a life defined by having love for those who do not love us back…” (Lk. 6:30-36).

To be peacemakers. Why? Because true Biblical forgiveness must be extended as well as received.
25 "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions.

26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."
They asked for “more faith!” (Lk. 17:5)

But as I read it, it’s *not* more faith they needed, just a more _mature faith_.

What the disciples immediately recognized, was how hard it would be to accept responsibility for rebuking our offenders, accepting their repentance, and extending unlimited forgiveness.
A maturing Christian has the ability to graciously respond to one who may be in error (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

He or she HAS an abiding love for the Church, the bride of Christ (1 Pet 1:22; Eph. 5:32).

They possess a heart that looks and longs for evidences of grace rather than always self-righteously looking at the faults in the lives of others who are in Christ (Gal. 6:1).
Jesus then tells all who will hear Him that a **mustard seeds worth of faith** is all one needs to accomplish this goal (**Luke 17:6**).

The point is that a **maturing faith** seeks to do the hard things, the uncomfortable things, the extraordinary things **for Christ’s sake**.
Luke 17:7-10

- We demonstrate our faith in God **not** through grandiose acts, but by simply **obeying the One** in whom we claim to have faith.

- **Is that your faith?** Are you forgiving? *This is God’s will for you.*
In **Luke 5:12-16**, The Bible says the **Ten** stood at a distance, called him master, and asked for “**MERCY.**”

Now our God is a God of MERCY. And His Son is today the evidence and the distributor of that Mercy.

So indeed Jesus healed all 10 lepers.
In Luke 17:15-16 – after Jesus heals all ten men with leprosy, we find that only one leper returns to thank Jesus, and that one is a “hated” Samaritan.

Only the Samaritan proved to be humble and faithful as evidenced by “a heart of sincere gratitude and love for all that God has done for him and through him,” (Heb. 12:28-29).
What Christ wanted was for His disciples to see God’s grace the way the Samaritan had done.

To reach THAT MILESTONE when gratitude is our first thought regarding His grace, rather than accepting it as some kind of entitlement. (Like the Pharisees)
This incident **contrasts** the immature attitude of Israel’s Leaders toward the blessings of the Messiah with the attitude that characterized the hated Samaritan.

And it may **contrast** your life today and the life God desires for you in the future…

*Are you grateful to God for His grace- or have you rejected Jesus’ mercy as unnecessary?*
Gratitude, *Thanksgiving*, is clear evidence of maturing faith... The giving of thanks is a humble recognition that every blessing comes from above...

That my forgiveness in Christ is *not* due me - as in a wage (*the wage of my sinful life is death* = Rom. 6:23) but are the result of the mercy of our great *God of grace*
Milestones or Millstone?

- We are *all* on a journey.

- We are *all* hopefully maturing every day.

- *My question is* – When your journey is over, when you die, will you have reached the Milestones of a forgiving and thankful heart, as God desires, **or will there be a type of Millstone in your future?**
Milestones or Millstone?

- **Milestones** are for celebrating progress.

- **Millstones** are for sending men to the abyss.

- *Which will you inherit?*