



still waters

home church studies

psalm 137

[Worship]

1 By the rivers of Babylon--there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. 2 On the willows there we hung up our harps. 3 For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" 4 How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! 6 Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy. 7 Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem's fall, how they said, "Tear it down! Tear it down! Down to its foundations!" 8 O daughter Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us! 9 Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!

Consider:

[Think & Pray...]

A Holy Awareness by Kari Jo Verhulst — Jesus shifts his focus to the "apostles" (Luke 17:5) who will lead and teach the future church. Their demand that Jesus "increase [their] faith" revealed their fear that they will not have enough. Jesus challenges their assumption that faith is a scarce commodity. The smallest amount can lead to seemingly immense results. An enormous tree will uproot itself at the mere suggestion. This example is pointedly absurd. Jesus does not tell them that if they have even a little faith, thousands will convert and follow. This further challenges the disciple's view of faithfulness as quantifiable, making it clear that the magnitude (or lack thereof) of our actions is really beside the point.

The next lesson is harder, in part because Jesus employs the metaphor of slavery without challenging the institution. In an age in which everything is a commodity, our workplaces and communities often behave as if this passage were an endorsement of non-mutual ownership of another's gifts and time. We see this from sweatshops to churches, when those in power claim the right to name and utilize another's gifts for the ends they have determined.

This passage is neither an endorsement of slavery nor a release from encouraging and affirming one another. Though the meaning has been applied abusively, these verses are an extension of Jesus' challenge to a quantified faith. Discipleship is a whole-life occupation that must be rooted in a holy awareness of God's sovereignty. It is not about pleasing others or serving for the sake of congratulations. This rests the purpose for our lives in the hands of God, not in the fickle approval of the human heart. We are equipped with the promise that our faith will be sufficient, and the assurance that "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

[The Scripture]

luke 17 .5-10

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 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. 7 "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? 8 Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? 9 Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 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!'"