

*“Release Something Miraculous In Your Life”*

Sermon for First Christian Church of Decatur, Georgia

World Communion Sunday, October 6, 2013

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Holy Scriptures: Luke 17: 1-10 1 Chronicles 4: 10

**Luke 17:1-10**

Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, “I repent”, you must forgive.’

5 The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ 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”? 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”? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 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!” ’

**1 Chronicles 4:10**

Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying,

“Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border,  
and that your hand might be with me,  
and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!”

And God granted what he asked.

A few years ago I was blessed to visit with Bill and Millie Simmons.

They are now sitting at the right hand of God,

side by side,

smiling down on us and encouraging the whole people of God.

While visiting with them in their lovely home

they showed me the television Bill won in a sweepstakes.

You could not miss it.

The TV was so big you could sit across the street in the neighbor's yard

and catch the Braves game.

They showed me the rec area where their two sons wrestled, fought, played

and had their friends over to hang out after school and on weekends.

During the tour I glanced at a neat desk in the study.

Written on little post-it notes above Bill Simmons' desk were two Holy Scriptures.

The first is from Proverbs 9, verse 10:

***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,  
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”***

The second is a prayer you and I can imagine Bill saying softly,

either out loud or in his wise and insightful mind, saying,

***“O that you would wonderfully bless me and help me in my work.  
Please be with me in all that I do,  
and keep me from all evil and disaster.”***

We may have heard this in slightly different language.

These words of faith that come from the heart are drawn from the prayer of Jabez,

which is found in I Chronicles 4:10:

***Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying,***

***“Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my  
border,***

***and that your hand might be with me,***

***and that you would keep me from hurt  
and harm!”***

***And God granted what he asked.***

Bruce Wilkinson has extensively explored this prayer, and he writes:

*“At first glance,*

*the four requests may strike you as sincere, sensible, even noble,*

*but not terribly remarkable.*

*Yet just under the surface of each [request of God]*

*lies a giant paradigm breaker*

*that runs exactly opposite to the way you and I usually think.”*

Consider carefully, says Wilkinson,

*“how dramatically each of Jabez’s requests*

*can release something miraculous in your life.”*

**Release something miraculous in your life.**

Our request starts with prayer,  
with praying like we mean it,  
like we need it,  
like we fully expect change and growth  
and something new and holy  
to enter in and bless you and me, mine  
and yours.

***Jabez prayed, “Bless me, Lord.”***

A rabbi once told me that to be blessed by God is to be made more than you were before.

We can relate to Jabez’s desire to be blessed.

Lord, give me your blessing, and I will be a blessing to your creation.

Make of me more than I was yesterday, before, in my past;

make me more than I once was.

Give me new growth and insight.

Grant me strength and wisdom.

Grace me with clarity of vision and hope for tomorrow.

Change is the hardest growth there is,

and yet it is the only way to grow.

***Jabez prayed, “Enlarge my border.”***

Expand, enlarge my territory.

Increase my sphere of influence.

Deepen and widen my impact in my family, the community

and on those whom you place in my path.

Jabez dared to envision something new, and asked God to expand his reach and touch.

We can, too.

Take a risk.

Dare to dream a new dream, to receive a new vision,

to see beyond where you have normally looked,

to observe the familiar through fresh eyes.

Start slowly.

Trust in small victories.

Build on small successes, if you will.

As your borders and territories are expanded,

you will be delighted to discover that

God will support that which God wants to happen and become.

Even the smallest of stones

dropped in a deep pool of water

will cause tiny ripples that reach the farthest shore.

***Jabez prayed that” your hand might be with me.”***

Trust that you do not walk alone.

Trust that the hand of God will be with you

through thick and thin, in good times and lean times, in love and loss.

Simply trusting for a moment, an hour, a day, a lifetime

that God’s hand is with you to have and to hold,

to comfort you, to heal you, and to push you into a new day

will increase your faith.

Remember when the apostles said to the Lord, *‘Increase our faith!’*

Do you remember what Jesus Christ said?

*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.*

Release something miraculous in your life.

Release outward the faith that you already have within.

It is perfectly okay if your faith is the size of the smallest of seeds.

Have the faith of a mustard seed,

as Jesus said,

trusting and obeying God’s will for you.

***Jabez prayed that “you would keep me from hurt and harm!”***

We are not in control of what others may do to us.

We are in control of intentionally not hurting ourselves and one another.

Lord, keep us from hurting or harming ourselves.

Help us to help ourselves by being good to our bodies, our souls, our minds.

Help us to look out for one another.

Help us to be our brother’s keeper and our sister’s keeper as well.

***Jabez prayed, and God granted what he asked.***

Yes, Lord!

God answers all prayers.

Sometimes God says yes, sometimes no, sometimes maybe later.

The nature and the nurture of God

is to seek to release something miraculous in your life.

The Apostle Paul said,

*“Rejoice always, pray constantly, and in all circumstances give thanks.”*

Pray constantly for God to set loose in your life whatever it is that God intends to be.

Become an open channel for the Holy Spirit to speak in and through you.

Be ready and available for your borders to be expanded and your territory enlarged.

Trust that the hand of God will be with you, to guide you, to sustain you, to push and pull you into something miraculous.

And, my friends, do no harm.

Be good to you and one another.

Be ready and prepared for a new vision, a new hope, a new miracle of grace.

And God will grant your prayers, and you shall be blessed and a blessing.

Let's return to Bill and Millie Simmons.

God blessed them with two outstanding sons in Steve and Doug

as well as Connie and Patty with whom they grew quite close.

Bill would say, *"We didn't have girls, but we sure have nice daughters-in-law."*

When Steve told his parents they were going to adopt children from Central America,

it was hard for Bill.

Bill wrestled for a little while with the possibility of adopted Latino grandchildren.

Then one day Millie found him in the basement,

hard at work refinishing a rocker.

The rocker had sat in the basement for years, ignored and unattended.

When Millie saw Bill's loving efforts

she knew that he was going to love his new grandchild.

His short term wrestling turned into long term love.

Today his grandchildren cherish their memories of their beloved grandfather,

saying, *"We will remember the hikes and walks and smiles he would give us."*

Watch out because the hand of God will do this.

Our short term wrestling may evolve into long term love.

We think we are set in your ways, proud and defiant and solid,

and suddenly along comes a new child, a new face, a new opportunity,

a new way of seeing the world around you,

and the next thing you know

we are sweating and swearing and striving

to make something happen for the glory of God.

Watch out, my friends.

This prayer life released miracles of grace and love for Bill and Millie Simmons,

expanded their borders in so many ways,

and guided their daily walk with Christ and His world.

Imagine what miracles God can't wait to release in you!

*All power be to the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!*

EXTRA MATERIAL for World Communion Sunday from National Council of Churches:

World Communion Sunday – celebrated the first Sunday in October – is one of the most venerable of “special Sundays.” The day has taken on new relevancy and depth of meaning in a world where globalization often has undermined peace and justice – and in a time when fear divides the peoples of God's earth. On this day we celebrate our oneness in Christ, the Prince of Peace, in the midst of the world we are called to serve – a world ever more in need of peacemaking.

World Communion Sunday (originally called World Wide Communion



Sunday) originated in the Presbyterian Church (USA). In 1936, for the first time, the first Sunday in October was celebrated in Presbyterian churches in the United States and overseas. From the beginning, it was planned so that other denominations could make use of it and, after a few years, the idea spread beyond the Presbyterian Church.

The Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Churches (a predecessor body of the National Council of Churches) was first associated with World Wide Communion Sunday in 1940 when the department's executive secretary, Jesse Bader, led in its extension to a number of churches throughout the world.