

Hard Math

Weekly Devotion | Luke 17:1–10

Reflection

There's a kind of math most of us learned early, even if no one ever said it out loud: keep track. Remember who owes you. Remember what you're owed. It's not malicious, most of the time — it's just how we protect ourselves from being hurt the same way twice.

Jesus interrupts that math this week. Not gently, either. He opens with a warning sharp enough to make a millstone sound merciful, moves straight into forgiveness that outpaces anything reasonable — seven times in a single day — and lands on a servant who does everything asked and still doesn't get to call it extraordinary.

None of it adds up the way we'd expect.

But maybe that's the invitation. Not to abandon math altogether, but to do a different kind of it — the kind where a mustard seed is sufficient, where forgiveness (when it's met by real repentance) doesn't require a calculator, and where showing up and doing what's yours to do is enough, even without applause.

This week, notice where you're still keeping the old ledger. Notice, too, where you might be carrying more than is yours to carry — where “forgive” has quietly become “stay,” when what you actually need is a boundary, not a bigger burden. Both can be faithful. Both can be this text, lived out.

Questions for Reflection

1. Where in your life are you still “doing the math” — keeping score, even quietly?
2. Is there a mustard seed's worth of faith you've been underestimating, waiting for it to feel like more before you trust it?
3. Where might forgiveness and reconciliation need to be two separate things for you right now, rather than one?
4. What is one piece of “plain duty” in your life you do without needing it to be extraordinary? How does it feel to let that be enough?

Closing Prayer

God of small and sufficient things, meet me in my own hard math this week. Where I'm counting, help me release. Where I need to protect myself, give me courage to hold the boundary. And where I've simply done what was mine to do, let that be enough — for me, and between us. Amen.

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