

Luke 17: 5-6

Is there ever enough: How much Faith?

Confirmation – Sunday May 18, 2014

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“Lord, increase our faith!” I am quite sure that there are a number of people here this morning feeling the same way as the disciples. To have faith – a faith that is strong and unshakeable – is something we all want to have but are not quite sure how to get. The disciples asked for more faith in light of what Jesus just told them: they must forgive those who have wronged them - again and again and again. By now I think they were wondering if they could live up to Jesus’ expectations of them. I can imagine that in the back of their head they were thinking: it’s not just about forgiveness but also about the other stuff we are to uphold – to love God and love neighbor, to love everyone unconditionally, to care about people without exception, to give one’s life to the cause of being a follower of Jesus, and to always do our best.

I am not surprised that they asked for more faith. The tasks before them seemed daunting. And it is in that sense that I think we may feel a lot like those first disciples: overwhelmed and at times a little frightened by the demands not just of daily life but also of being a good and faithful Christian in this world. Our confirmands might be wondering what they have signed up for. We might wonder if we have enough faith – not just to master our life in all its facets – the good, the bad, and the ugly - but also to live out our call to being a disciple of Christ, and being a faithful one at that. That is actually a piece of our stewardship efforts – how to find a faith that will sustain us as we live and have our being in this time and place.

Jesus does not get mad at the request of his disciples, but he actually gives them and us very good advice: the amount of our faith does not have to be huge and it does not have to be heroic to work.

We might feel daunted by the call to discipleship. We might feel that we don’t know enough or have the right tools to do the work we are called to do. But Jesus says that even if we only have faith the size of a mustard seed, we can move trees (or mountains). We know that a mustard seed is ridiculously small, and that trying to dig out a tree can become a gardener’s worst nightmare.

What Jesus is saying is that it really doesn't take all that much faith to be faithful. Even the smallest amount of faith can make a huge difference in this world and in the lives of people. Just a little bit of faith is enough.

I don't know about you but I was raised believing that "more is better" especially when it comes to faith. So I try my hardest to live my life with faith. But I admit that sometimes I find that hard to do, looking at the state of our world and all of its problems. I imagine that you do too. It is easy to get discouraged and depressed by all the things that make life difficult.

So, for today, let's believe Jesus. Let's take him at his word. If only we had the tiniest speck of faith, if we only have a puny, tiny, little bit of faith, that would be enough. That is all it takes. Let's just for the moment, believe Jesus.

Maybe we don't think that we have enough faith, **but let's look for seeds.** Maybe when we are at a peaceful or reflective moment, or we see someone or a situation that stirs our hearts, we might notice that we have inside ourselves a compassion – a compassion that wants to help.

I am not talking about following in the footsteps of a Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Saint Francis kind of person. I just mean that we notice we have a little compassion inside of us that wants to do something or help someone. That's a seed.

Maybe when we are out walking on a beautiful day and our hearts are stirred by all the beauty and smell and colors around us, we might get the sense of connectedness of all life. Maybe we feel that somehow things will be alright if we make a little bit of an effort to care for the beauty around us. That is a seed, and it might be enough to start something new.

Maybe we don't feel particularly Christian, and might find it hard to wrap our heads around what that actually means, or we don't feel that we are a good enough person to follow in Jesus' footsteps. But if we see something in him that is worthwhile pursuing, that is a seed.

Maybe we don't believe everything that is written in the Bible. There are a whole lot of strange things in the Bible and where does it say that we are supposed to believe everything as written?

Still, let's look for seeds. Maybe when we read scripture and we notice all those stories that speak of God with us, God seeking and journeying with us through all of life's experiences, and then we read how God sent us Jesus to show us how to live abundantly, and we begin to understand what a beautiful story that actually is, a seed has been sown. Maybe that is enough.

Maybe we don't know what to believe about Jesus Christ. Did he really perform miracles? Did he really rise from the dead on the third day? Is he truly the son of God, the way, the life, the truth? Maybe we don't know exactly what to think about Jesus Christ, but the fact that we wrestle with these questions are seeds. Maybe for now, it is enough.

And yes, sometimes we don't feel like we even have seeds in us. There are times when we feel like we have no faith at all. Maybe some among us are in one of those moments where we don't have much hope for tomorrow. We don't really know what to believe. We don't really know where we are going, and what this thing called life is all about. There are times when we feel like that.

Thank God for a place where we can wrestle with our faith. We are here, the church is here, to plant seeds of faith – be it in our children or young adults or anyone else who comes through the doors to worship with us. We are here to plant seeds that maybe will grow into ministries and programs that can make a difference in the lives of people around us.

We are here to plant seeds to hope and strength and love in each other that will give our lives meaning and abundance. Our job is to sow seeds of faith and to nourish them as best as we can. But we also have to let go and trust that God will do God's part because faith is really about trust, not believing certain things.

Let's not forget that this is God's realm, not ours. It is God's ability to provide miraculous growth, not ours. It is God's capacity to take the smallest amount of faith and use it to move trees or mountains. It is God's amazing

strength that transforms the smallest of beginnings into something great. It is God's gift to us and not something that happens solely by human effort. Our job is just to sow a few seeds.

How does this actually work? Listen to this: Boris Yeltsin was once asked by reporters, "What gave you the courage to stand firm during the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union?"

And Yeltsin replied, "It was the example of Lech Walesa," the Polish leader, an ordinary Polish citizen, an electrician who led the revolution in Poland and overturned Soviet rule.

Lech Walesa was asked on another occasion what had inspired him. And he responded: Martin Luther King, Jr.

And Martin Luther King, Jr. was asked what had inspired him? And he replied, "It was the faith, love and the prayers of all those ordinary people he'd met, because," he said, "it is all the seeds sown by individuals in the power of God that can topple oppressive regimes."

Our job, our part in God's Kingdom, is to scatter the seed, to sow the seed of God's love, to take the gospel message about forgiveness and unconditional love everywhere we go. We don't have to understand how this happens. We don't have to know everything about why it happens. We don't have to know anything about how it grows. We only have to do our part and just sow a few seeds.

And we have to do this and keep doing this even though it looks like not much is happening, even though we don't see the results for a long time, even though we think that some days our labor is in vain, even though we do the very best we can, we often make mistakes, we are to keep sowing, day in and day out, the small things that by God's power grow into something large.

We won't know where our confirmands will end up on their faith journey. It is not ours to know, nor to decide. All we did together was to plant seeds. And that is the little reminder I gave them for their journey: a locket with a mustard seed in it to remind them that faith the size of a mustard seed might just be enough.

We all have the opportunity and responsibility to sow the seeds of faith everyday as part of God's plans for God's realm – at church, at work, at the market place, at home. We do that by inspiring others to greater love,

offering a smile, a gesture, a helping hand, a kind word. We are to scatter with utter abandon and trust that God will do God's part. Amen.