

Increase Our Faith!

Luke 17:1-10

Grace, Peace, and mercy from God our Father our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Who here this morning would like more faith? More faith to endure the changes and chances of life that come our way. More faith to give me strength to carry out my duties and yes, even share the good News of Jesus Christ to a friend, a neighbor, or maybe a chance meeting with a stranger who has shared a crisis in his or her life. More faith to avoid and overcome temptation by the devil. Or how about more faith to forgive someone who has sinned against you. We all know that is our calling as Christians and children of God to be forgiving, but sometimes it's downright difficult, particularly if the hurt is running deep. "Lord, increase my faith."

In our gospel for this day that is what the disciples ask of Jesus. "Lord, increase our faith." Jesus has been teaching them and the disciples are doing what disciples do, they are listening to their teacher. They are trying the best they can to take everything in that Jesus is teaching them.

First, we hear Jesus say, "temptations to sin are sure to come." And each of us have the potential to be that person to whom temptations come. "But woe to him through whom they come." To tell you the truth that gets my heart pounding. Especially when it comes to what Jesus says next. "It would be better for him to have a millstone put around His neck and be cast into the sea than to cause one of these little ones to sin." It shows us how seriously Jesus takes ours and stumbling. He is teaching His disciples and us to who are taking in His words this morning to pay attention. The devil is good at setting traps with alluring bait. Temptations to sin in the language of our gospel gives the picture of a stumbling block or a stick with a string tied to it hold up a snare/box. Now we certainly do not desire to be the cause of someone falling into sin. What a terrible burden that can be. So, Jesus says it would be better to have a large stone around one's neck and be cast into the sea.

Such occasions may come when it comes to forgiving someone who has sinned against you. Jesus is very clear here that we all need to be on watch because, some of the hardest words to say in response to someone who has sinned against

you is, "I forgive you." Even after the one who has sinned comes and repents, or apologizes, or says, "I am sorry." Often times we may say, "That is OK," or, "Do not worry about it." No, no, no, say, "I forgive you." Three of the hardest words. Especially if the hurt is running deep. Then Jesus ups the ante, "Even if he sins against you seven times and returns to you each time saying, 'I repent.' You must forgive him.

Just a little thought at that point on forgiveness. Someone asked me, "Should I forgive that brother or sister who sinned against me even if he or she has not acknowledged they sinned or repented?" Two thoughts: If you have experienced the hurt by a person, Jesus would have us go to that person and point the problem that is there, point out the relationship has been broken. Do this one on one. Not on social media. Many problems could be alleviated if this step were to be taken. Another thought is that we forgive that person anyway and turn it over to God, then we can be more at peace, and not the problem fester and get blown up out proportion in our own lives. O Lord, Increase our faith.

That is the response for the disciples as they listen to Jesus' teaching. Increase our faith to avoid temptation and not fall for the devil's traps, or not to cause those to sin by our behavior that runs contrary to God's Word, or to forgive, and keep on forgiving my whole life long. "Lord, Increase our faith."

"And the Lord said, 'If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree be uprooted and planted in the sea, it will obey you.'"

Many have taken these of Jesus as a name it claim it faith. You could say to this blank check to be a million dollars, it would. You say to the cancerous tumor in your body be gone and it will obey you. In other words, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed you could have anything and desire that your sinful mind can conceive. The problem with this thinking is that many take this to mean that with this small size faith in me I have the power to do miraculous things. As if I have in me to say to the mulberry tree to be uprooted and be planted in the sea. That is not saving faith.

And that many would consider this name it claim faith easier than forgiving the one who has sinned against you. It is so much what I can do on my own power with this small faith. The key who is this small faith in. it is faith in the one who

can. With Jesus this small faith does the seemingly impossible, forgiving the who has sinned against me.

With Jesus he takes our deep-rooted sins and uproots them. That, brothers, and sisters is done on the holy cross. Faith, even mustard seed, that looks outside of yourself and to the Word and promise of Jesus who forgives. And it really does not take much, with a mustard seed sized faith in Jesus you get all of Jesus, All His work for you, all His promises won for you on the Holy Cross.

As long as we live on this side of heaven, we disciples will encounter temptations, sin and be sinned against, it is all the sinful condition we live in. There will always be those times when our prayer is, "Lord increase my Faith." But Jesus has done it all for you and calls you through the His word, strengthens us with His Body and Blood in bread and wine. We follow Him living the life shaped in Christ's forgiveness, as we learn to forgiveness and our faith in Christ promises deepens and becomes rooted deeper in our lives. May that be my prayer and your prayer also.

May the peace of God that passes all understand keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.