

“Seed Sized Faith” 10/3/2010 Kenmore UMC

Luke 17:5-10

Rev. Dr. Peter LeValley

Our faith doesn't have to be huge to make an impact, we just have to use it in small steps and big ones.

Have you ever put the cart before the horse?
Really, imagine putting the cart before the horse.
It just doesn't work, I can imagine the horse before the cart pulling the cart, but the horse pushing the cart; I don't think so.

I think we did that with this story, or at least we miss some of the power of these stories when we read in the order they are written.

I love the power and energy and vision of the first story. *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.*” It says to me as people of faith what amazing things we can do.

We can in faith say we are going to feed hundreds of people each day, each week, and lo and behold, a food shelf is created like the Network of Religious communities, or a feeding ministry is started like what is now called Central City Café, or a food bank that resources food shelves around the city and throughout the area.

We all know the stories of dreams come to life that seemed impossible, all through mustard seed size faith.

I have to admit though that the practical side of me has left orphaned any number of dreams I have had, or even others I have been in ministry with because I just couldn't get the faith to plant the seed in the first place.

And that is what I want to flip flop these two stories. Did you even hear the second story Tom/Lisa read?

The story of the “worthless slave or servant”? It doesn't have the energy or the power of a dream, it is not visionary, it's ordinary, humdrum, don't really like it portrayal of day in and day out life.

The slave is working away all day, you know when it is time for dinner, he or she is then going to prepare the meal and serve the meal and be given no or very little thanks, in fact so the story of Jesus in response to the disciples asking for him to “Increase their faith,” goes as a slave after a hard days work you just say *“we are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!”*

It may not be very inspiring, it may not lift your eyes to dream dreams or your spirit to see visions, but I would suggest to you, the story of the worthless slave is the power that plants the mustard seed and transforms the world.

When the disciples ask Jesus to *“increase our faith,”* he doesn't say as Elijah said to Elisha when he passed the mantle of prophecy to him here is your double share of the spirit. Jesus doesn't give them a four step process to a new stronger faith; Jesus doesn't ‘supersize’ their faith.

He says if you have faith the size of the smallest seed you can move a mulberry tree into the sea, or as Matthew tells the story, ‘you can move mountains.

And how do you do this, by being who you are, or rather by following in the way of the One who is Lord of all because he is servant of all.

The disciples cry out when they see the enormity of the task, the ministry Jesus is giving them, *Increase our Faith!!!* And Jesus tells them, tells us go and serve, go do what you do, and

as you do 'that thing you do' serve as Jesus has served us, you will move mountains, you will transform communities, you will transform lives, including your own.

You see faith is not measured in amounts, but in actions.

Forest Gump, does amazing things because he has faith and he doesn't know he can't, so he does. You remember his mother taught him, "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what your gonna git." So, he puts on leg braces, he gets on the bus, he makes friends with Jenny who turns out to be an abused child, he runs, ...

Rev. Richard J. Fairchild - Spirit Networks, 2001 – 2006 makes an interesting analogy for faith, he says:

"Faith is somewhat like pregnancy.

You simply can't make a valid distinction between having a little faith and a lot of faith

Any more than you can claim that someone is a little bit pregnant but not really a lot pregnant.

He goes on to say: What I am saying to you today is not - "have more faith" - but rather - "work with the faith that you already have".

My friends, when we start acting in faith the very first thing we discover is that a little is a lot.

In a few moments we will take some bread and break it, and we will feed the souls of you faithful who have gathered here, will take the cup and drink it and that little grape juices will become the power of Christ love welling up in our soul until it overflows in hope and joy and peace and love. And we will join with sisters and brothers in Christ, here this morning, and throughout our community, our country, throughout the world, "*My Body broken for you, My Blood poured out for you that you may have life.*"

Friends, faith is God's gift to us in Christ, seed sized faith that has transformed our lives and as we step forth in faith in small steps or big steps will transform the world.

Thanks be to God for the power to do all things in Christ. Amen.

Additional thoughts for reflection:

The most important step to get to the theological core issues of this passage is truly to understand the faith talked about here as Christian, not in the sense of the faith of the Christians, but in the sense of the faith *in Christ* that mirrors the faith *of Christ*. Dr. Margit Ernst-Habib

There is a legend from the Orient about a traveller making his way to a large city. One night he meets two other travellers along the road –Fear and Plague.

Plague explains to the traveller that, once they arrived, they are expected to kill 10,000 people in the city.

The traveller asks Plague if Plague would do all the killing.

"Oh, no, I shall kill only a few hundred. My friend Fear will kill the others."

Fear, whether real or imagined, can discourage us, overwhelm us, strangle us. And fear is widespread in our society, from the personal - fear of failure, fear of embarrassment, fear not being loved, to the social - fear that war and disasters will go on forever, fear that society will collapse, fear that the pollution will kill us, and so on and on.

And in the church too there is fear.

The personal fears. The social fears. And the spiritual fears. *Rev. Richard J. Fairchild - Spirit Networks*