**Your Faith is Enough**

Pentecost 17, October 2, 2022

Luke 17: 5-10 Russell Mitchell-Walker

Have you ever felt like you did not have enough faith? That your faith wasn’t strong enough? Maybe you’ve gone through a time of doubting. Or had an important prayer for someone who was ill that wasn’t answered the way you’d hoped. Then you wonder if your faith was strong enough. This was the feeling of the disciples in todays’ reading. They are probably starting to feel overwhelmed with the demanding messages of Jesus – give away all your possession, search out the one who’s lost, change family norms, carry your cross, love the poor and outcast. It is a lot to ask of anyone. So they ask Jesus to ‘increase their faith”.

Jesus responds with some unreal and obscure comments. So much so that some think Jesus’ response is exaggerated, perhaps satirical, even sarcastic. What the disciples are asking for is also kind of crazy. Jesus’ response indicates that what they are asking for is unreasonable, unrealistic. They have enough faith. There is not increments when it comes to faith. You either have it or you don’t. Even if you feel you have very little faith, like a mustard seed, the possibilities with that faith are endless. Jesus may not have meant a literal moving of a tree into the sea, but as usual, is speaking in a metaphor to indicate that a little faith can go a long way. It is enough. The disciples are enough. We are enough.

Faith is about trust and in this instance, the disciples are wanting to increase their loyalty, their trust of Jesus. Which is why Jesus’ response is what it is. You either trust me or you don’t. There is no middle ground. It’s like asking someone to increase being pregnant. You either are or you aren’t. So the response is silly and mocking. Like the request.

We know Jesus is not one who went about casting mulberry bushes into oceans, or making a big show of faith. That is absurd and cheap. He went about loving others and challenging the systems of injustice. He was about bringing the Kingdom of heaven, the shalom community into reality here on earth, and in our lives. The messages in the last few chapters were all about generosity, inclusiveness, just economy, and loving compassion. So the next section about slaves plays on what was expected, what one would usually do, probably in a tone that would challenge it. Given the context of the gospel and the message in Luke, the followers of Jesus, the disciples and Jesus, probably would ask the slave to come and eat after working outside, rather than asking them to make a meal for them. Jesus, and the disciples in learning from Jesus, would thank them and be kind to them after all the work they did. Maybe also, Jesus is pointing to the everyday acts of a slave, as similar to everyday acts of faith, of doing what is right, what needs to be done, responding to the needs around us and caring for others, as the places where faith is found, rather than in mighty acts or deeds that we might think are worthy of heaven. All acts of faith are worthy and enough, because we are enough. God loves us as we are and accepts the faith we have and how we live it out.

Today we embark on an act of faith as we enact the sacrament of communion. Today is Worldwide Communion Sunday, so as we take communion, we do so knowing that Christians all around the world are also celebrating this holy sacrament of remembering the love and life of Jesus. We are connected in our faith and love. May we remember this as we celebrate communion today.

You may wonder what difference the little acts of faith you do might make in light of the major challenges and struggles we see in the world. I invite you think for a moment, what are the little acts of faith that you have carried out this week, even one? Look around and think about all the acts of faith, acts of kindness, acts of love that others did this week as well. Perhaps you experienced one from someone here. Now think about what the world would be like if none of us did any of those things this week. (*pause)* Now think what the world would be like this next week if you each offered more simple acts of faith. May it be so. Go and live out your faith, because, it is enough.