“***Will He Find Faith?***” by S. Finlan, at The First Church, Oct. 5, 2025

**Lamentations 3:19–26**

19 The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! 20 My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. 21 But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: 22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” 25 The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. 26 It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

**Luke 17:5–6; 18:8**

17:5 The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” 6 The Lord replied, “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. . . 8And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

The book of Lamentations can be one of the saddest in the Bible, since it is a poetic mourning of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, but the author puts some amazing and timeless truths in there. This passage says that the Lord’s “mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning” (Lam 3:22–23). I don’t know if what it says really applies to people who have been dislocated by war, but it applies to those of us who have a home and relative safety. It seems to be advice about prayer and contemplation, when it says “it is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord” (3:26). That is faith in practice—in silence. It is advice for prayerful meditation. One affirms one’s faith that an answer will come, and then waits patiently in quietness. God’s mercies will come showering down anew every day. We can always call on such spiritual mercies, even if we are suffering physically. We still have blessings to count.

Now Jesus tells the apostles, when they ask to have their faith increased, that they can do it any time they like. If they have a little seed of true faith, even as slight as a mustard seed, they can do amazing things. I think the disciples of Jesus, including the four gospel authors, sometimes took Jesus too literally, failing to see when he was speaking metaphorically. This might be one of those passages. Has anyone ever made a tree be uprooted and planted in the sea, by the strength of his word? I don’t think so. It is a metaphor, meaning that you can do extraordinary things if you have faith. You cannot lift *literal* trees or move *literal* mountains, but you can lift trees of obstruction and remove mountains of spiritual difficulty. It requires strength of character, patience, and faith.

And yet, he wonders if there will be widespread faith on earth when he finally does return here. It’s a rhetorical question. They don’t have to answer it. They probably didn’t know how to respond.

But I think the answer is “yes.” I think he will only return when there *is*, in fact, widespread faith on earth. I don’t expect him to return during a time of war, affliction, and chaos. If that were the case, he would already have had plenty of opportunity to return before and during World War II, for instance, when the Satanic spirits of Hitler and Stalin were so powerful.

Some people who anticipate the return of Christ like to apply the Book of Revelation to our time, but I don’t do that. I think the author of Revelation was reacting to the economic power and the violent behaviors of the Roman empire. The number of the beast spells out Nero’s name. The author is responding to threats of his time. Applying things in the Book of Revelation to our day and age involves an over-active imagination. Instead, his question seems to imply that it’s up to us whether we practice faith, and whether there will be faith on earth when the Son of man returns.

In today’s passage, Jesus tells the disciples that their faith can do seemingly miraculous things. Big problems in life can be handled. Difficult transitions can be navigated. New prospects will open up. Will we be spiritually guided as we live our lives? Will we have faith that Jesus can see?

Faith is sometimes difficult, especially during difficult times. We have to believe in something we can’t see. But that is always the case, even in good times. We can’t actually see spirit, we can only see the fruits, the results of the spirit. But we certainly can develop a taste for truth, a feeling for goodness, and we can know when something outrages our sense of values. We can pray to be more giving, more attentive to others, more faithful, and stronger in our faith. We can gradually learn about God’s plan for us.

We can feel strength in our faith, and we can fine-tune our receptivity—our ability to *receive*. A little faith leads to the desire for greater faith. Are you like the disciples, and desire that he increase your faith and understanding? A greater faith is yours for the asking, and for the *doing*—putting faith into action, putting spirit into matter.

John Kasich, former governor of Ohio, has written two books about faith. In one he mentions a number of ministries that have opened up at churches. His wife started one that she calls “adopting the olds,” she and her friends would go visit old people who were alone. Another group created a meeting house where Christians, Jews, and Muslims get together and talk. He says change is driven from the bottom up; it’s never started by the politicians. He says he won’t vote for anybody who’s an ideologue on either side. What he looks for is character. (www.denisonforum.org/podcasts/faith-and-clarity/what-role-does-faith-play-in-building-better-communities/)

So let us put faith into action, bringing heaven into earth. His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. When God and people work together, nothing is impossible.