

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Deacon Jacqueline Esama-John. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Introduction

Today is 2nd October 22 and it is the 27th Sunday in Ordinary time. Our lectionary readings continue to stir in the subject of Faith and today Jesus is challenging us to that if we have faith as small as a mustard seed, we could move mountains.

Call to worship

Faithful God, you are the source of all wisdom and at a time when so many are seeking direction, we come to you trusting that you will inspire us and help us to guard the faith which has held together, the lives of so many generations before us. Enable us loving God, to Let go of the burdens that weigh us down. And open our hearts to the warmth of your redeeming love. In Jesus name we pray. **Amen.**

Hymn – STF 662: Have you heard God’s voice has your heart been stirred?

(Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here.)

https://youtu.be/iQ_TRU6aPbY

Verse 1

Have you heard God’s voice; has your heart been stirred?

Are you still prepared to follow?

Have you made a choice to remain and serve
though the way be rough and narrow?

Refrain

Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?

Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow?

Refrain

Verse 2

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
when the multitudes are silent?

Will you make a choice to stand your ground
when are the crowds turning violent?

Refrain

Verse 3

In your city streets will you be God's heart?

Will you listen to the voiceless?

Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,
will you share your faith with the faithless?

Refrain

Verse 4

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
and believe it could be different?

Will you share your views using words of grace?

Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

Refrain (slightly different from above)

We will walk the path that will cost us much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.

We will trust in One who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow

Jacqueline G Jones

**Prayers of Adoration and Thanksgiving and Confession
Let us pray.**

Gracious God, we continue to Rejoice in your blessings,
We thank you for the created world and for your great love
and care. We offer you our thanks for the liberating power
of your gospel. We stand in awe at your sacrifice on the
cross and we see your power in lives transformed, in
hearts on fire. We praise your holy name for all creatures
great and small, and for painted landscapes in colourful
hues. We thank you for all the myriads of seasons that we
inhabit, we praise you for light and warmth, for rain and
sunshine. We thank you that within each seed there is a
spark of life. We bless you for your invitation to us today to
take up the challenge of Faith as small as a mustard seed
and see mountains moved. We say Blessing, and glory,
honour and wisdom, and thanks be given to you almighty
God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

We say together...

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.**

Amen

Silence

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your
sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you
in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

1st Reading: Habakkuk 2:1-4

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

God's Reply to the Prophet's Complaint

2 I will stand at my watch-post,

and station myself on the rampart;

I will keep watch to see what he will say to me,

and what he^[a] will answer concerning my complaint.

2 Then the LORD answered me and said:

Write the vision;

make it plain on tablets,

so that a runner may read it.

3 For there is still a vision for the appointed time;

it speaks of the end, and does not lie.

If it seems to tarry, wait for it;

it will surely come, it will not delay.

4 Look at the proud!

Their spirit is not right in them,

but the righteous live by their faith.^[b]

2nd Reading: Luke 17:5-10

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ ⁶The Lord replied, ‘If you had faith the size of a^[a] mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, “Be uprooted and planted in the sea”, and it would obey you.

⁷‘Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, “Come here at once and take your place at the table”? ⁸Would you not rather say to him, “Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink”? ⁹Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, “We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!”’

Time to reflect

We are one month into the New Methodist connexional year, and we have had several key meetings already- District Synods, circuit meetings, staff meetings, stewards’ meetings etc. There is some really big stuff that are happening in our churches and

circuits and districts in our country and indeed in our world. The planet as we know is in danger of its life. There is bewilderment of all sorts- It’s been exhausting trying to keep up with the news and to adjust to life with the forever cost of living crisis. We are still trying to digest the implications of the recent mini budget. Communities have been devastated by the spates of Gun and knife crimes, and there is the senseless war in Ukraine and other parts of the world which continue to impact our lives globally, not to talk about our individual and personal pain and daily battles.

We may well be begging for more faith just as the disciples are in our gospel passage today. How do we keep faith in the midst of life’s troubles? Our readings today seem to be a bit dismal and not very positive. However, I believe that there is a golden thread of hope and encouragement underpinning them all.

In our Old Testament reading from Habakkuk which we just heard, we hear God’s Reply to a Prophet’s Complaint and the reassurance that the righteous live by their faith.

And in the gospel reading, Jesus seems to rebuke his disciples, who after all, some might say, have only asked for a bit more faith. We would recall that in previous passages in Luke 6 and 7, Jesus has been asking some incredible things of his disciples and challenging them to embrace some radical concepts – like

giving away their possessions, taking up his cross, forgiving those who wrong them 70 x 7 times, and much more. They might have felt somewhat inadequate to the tasks around them, maybe unable to imagine how they could possibly accomplish any of what he is asking of them, so they ask, “Lord increase our Faith”.

Jesus does not grant them their request but instead replies with a story about a mustard seed and a mulberry tree and references to being unworthy servants. Imagine things that we cannot understand. Things that we are unable to make sense of, such as a mulberry tree that bears fruit in the sea! That sounds like an impossibility but that is exactly what Jesus is trying to teach his disciples and us! With God all things are possible.

I was thinking about how remarkable this response of Jesus is. I don't know about you, but I am a visual learner. I learn through images, and I like to imagine things as I read them. It helps me to understand better.

And so, this week as I read through the gospel passage in Luke, the image of the Space project came to my mind, I have attached a picture of the building site for your perusal. You can also see it online if you log in to the circuit website. This is also an opportunity for those of you who have been asking about the status of the building project to see what it looks like now. I know that there are lots of questions of course that people

might be asking such as ‘Where are we going to find the 1.5 million pounds that is needed to complete this work?’ Of course, we will have our questions and doubts as a normal part of our shared humanity, there are lots of things which we do not know or understand. But are we prepared to be surprised by God? I want to extend an invitation to you my dear brothers and sisters to come onboard our faith journey here at the Enfield circuit and try to unravel those words of Jesus? “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.”

Some might say that a mustard seed is not the smallest seed and yes that is true, because there are other small seeds like sesame seeds or puppy seeds for example which are very tiny. But there is something about mustard seeds that make them kind of special-Mustard seeds are part of the weed family and you know what weeds like. Those of you who have gardens will know that weeds grow everywhere. A mustard seed is so tenacious that no matter what is in its way, that mustard seed is going to take root and grow. And so, Jesus was using this analogy of the mustard seed to help the disciples realize the great potential for faith.

So, what might having “Faith as small as a mustard seed” break open to us, for this project? What faith do we have to exercise to bring this to fruition? And let me remind you of the definition of faith in the Bible. It is written in Hebrews 11: 1 that “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence

of things not seen” (NIV) As human beings, we often look for evidence or proof of things that we hope to receive. We look for signs and clues. When asked to give a sign that he was the Messiah, Jesus said that no signs will be given. But a Messiah came. What next? “Lord increase our Faith”- The apostles, like the Father with a sick child in Mark 9: 24, who when asked whether he believes Jesus can heal his son, cries out “I do believe, help my unbelief”. Help our unbelief Lord Jesus Christ.

We should be ever so proud that we had faith enough to get the building project started right in the middle of the pandemic knowing that we don’t have all the money but trusting that the funds will be granted.

This is where we find ourselves today 2nd October 2022. Are you feeling a bit scared or hopeless thinking that maybe we’ve beaten more than we could chew? OR have we still got the capacity to believe in miracles for ourselves and others. I earnestly pray that we will go with the latter. Jesus says that “if we have faith as small as a mustard seed, we can say to the mountain be ye removed”. There is so much more to life than can be proven with mathematical equations. The requirement for faith is a willingness to trust God. That doesn’t mean that we don’t do what is necessary to achieve our goals. Having faith is also seeking wisdom and direction to get to where we need to get to. Faith can open our lives and allow God’s miracles to come true.

Jesus praised those who made use of their faith and called them blessed. He encountered people with extraordinary needs who exercised their faith and believed that something new and positive would happen to them. People like the woman with a blood disorder who received healing merely by touching Jesus’ cloak. "Your faith has made you well," Jesus said to her. "Your faith has made you well," he tells a blind beggar "Your faith has saved you," he says to the woman who anoints his feet, "Such faith I have not seen in all of Israel!" he exclaims about a Roman centurion who was concerned for a sick servant.

What would it look like this connexional year, to take up Jesus’ invitation and challenge of “a mustard seed faith in the completion of this stunning building, where all people of Faith and No Faith will be welcomed and cared for? I never thought about this with such depth and appreciation. And it seems to me, an excellent invitation to all of us, to also ask ourselves: “Is anything too hard for God? (Jeremiah 32: 27).

Faith is the spiritual reality in which we live our lives and at its heart is servanthood and service, love for others and the world. So, it is not surprising that Jesus follows his comments about faith with a story of servant hood. We are called to live out our faith, however small and insignificant it may feel. We are encouraged to not limit our perspectives and perception of things. For Jesus, this is not a question of having an increase in faith. It is much more than that. It is a question of being active

in the exercise of the faith that we already have. It is about joining forces together to do the fundraising. It is about reaching out to potential grant funders and donors and partners.

It should be said that the cost-of-living crisis, the aftermath of Covid-19 etc, have all catapulted us into uncharted waters and brought us face to face with an unprecedented opportunity for mission and to prepare the way for others. This is a time when our opening hymn comes into its own. And there is a portion of that hymn that touched me deeply: “Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith and believe it could be different? Will you share your views using words of grace? Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?”

I can only say that it is our living faith that will allow us to watch the news and believe wholeheartedly that things will be different and better. It is our living faith that will allow us to use words of grace, to press through, upward and onward beyond the stumbling blocks. So, let us not throw in the towel and give up but rather let us continue to keep moving forward the agenda of the fundraising, trusting that God will provide. Well, apart from the building site we also have the shed which is the temporary home of the Space project. There is something comforting about this place. This is a space for personal reflection and community reflection. Soon we will be offering our residents in the community, the English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) course. Soon we will have

a community pantry to help with the cost-of-living crisis. I love the fact that the disciples request hinges on the concept of community. The request is not “increase **my** faith” “but increase **our** faith”

The Holy Spirit moves through our lives in ways that we cannot imagine. We are the people of the resurrection. We believe in what others consider impossible. We are holding space for our community in this shed. We are doing all we can in trying to raise funds for this project. We are committed to walking alongside our community whatever journey they are on and there is the real possibility that we will raise a mulberry tree that bears fruit in the sea!

This is Christ’s message to us today. We are called to be an active witness to Christ’s love in the world- loving God and serving neighbour. So may we learn to know ourselves as Christ knows us and be prepared to have faith as small as a mustard seed and to see ever more amazing things, more than we could ever dream of as we put our trust in God. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession & The Lord’s Prayer

Loving God we pray for your church throughout the world. That it will continue to fulfil its mission in Faith, Love and service. We pray for guidance and discernment in our individual and collective ministries. We pray that Christians will

continue to respond to God's calling with generosity and shine the light of Christ to the world with everlasting joy. We pray for those who are persecuted because of their faith. For those who may be struggling with their faith, those who do not yet know you. May you be close to them and uphold them in your love.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayers.

We pray for your world, in all its beauty and possibilities and opportunities but also in all its brokenness and pain. We bring before you the troubles and dangers of people and nations, those in war torn zones, those experiencing the devastating effects of climate change. We pray we pray for peace in the world; We pray that all human rights and freedoms may be respected everywhere. we pray for the leaders of all nations that they will strive for justice and peace.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayers.

Creator God at this harvest time we acknowledge that all good gifts around us are sent from heaven above. Help us to receive

them gratefully, to use them wisely and to share them unselfishly as good stewards of your bounty. We pray for farmers, foresters and fishers, their families, and communities and all who depend on them. We lift up those farmers who struggle to make a living, those undercut by unfair competition. We pray for the continued development of sustainable woodland and biodiversity.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayers.

Healing God, we pray for all who are sick in body mind and spirit and in silence we remember those known personally to us. We pray for those for whom this has been a difficult week of severe loss and pain. In your goodness and mercy, grant them health of body, soundness of mind and peace of heart. We pray for all those who are bowed down by debt and the cost-of-living crisis. Those living alone with no one to care for them, those in broken relationships, those who face abuse and humiliation because of whatever reason. Those who are overwhelmed by despair. May they receive healing and the peace of Christ.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayers.

Faithful God, who in your wisdom has so ordered our earthly life that we must walk by faith and not by sight. Enable us to have a deeper faith in you in the midst of doubt and fear and everything that surpasses our understanding. Help us to entrust the past to your mercy, the present to your love and the future to your wisdom. We ask these prayers in the name of our loving and faithful God. Amen.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayers.

We remember before God those who have died and pray for those mourning their loss. May all who have died know the joy and peace of heaven for ever and may those who mourn know the warmth, comfort, and assurance of your love

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come.**

**thy will be done.
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses.
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation.
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Closing Hymn – My hope is built on nothing less-

Cornerstone- I offer you this contemporary hymn which is not in our Hymnbook and pray that you will be blessed by the words as you to sing/ read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/BHzlxSuHtqs>

Verse 1

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
And I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust in Jesus name

Verse 2

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil

Refrain

Christ alone, cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord, Lord of all.

Verse 4

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the 'whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay
He then is all my hope and stay

Refrain

Christ alone, cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord, Lord of all

Verse 5

When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh, may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone
Faultless, stand before the throne

Reuben Timothy Morgan/Jonas Carl Gustaf Myrin/Eric Liljero
(Hillsong Music Publishing UK)

Benediction

Imagine what a mustard seed of faith might do this week in your life. Now go in peace and may the God of all faithfulness, strengthen you in your love and care for one another. May the God of all grace give you vision, courage and as you seek to deepen the quality of your faith.

And the blessing of God the Father, God the son and God the holy spirit be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen**



The Space Project Building Site

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