

How Much Faith Is Enough?
Rev. Charles Curley
Luke 17:1-6
“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’”
Luke 17:5

“Increase our faith!” the apostles asked.

Give us more faith.

Sounds reasonable to me.

Has there ever been a time when it has not seemed that **more** faith would be a good thing?

Do we ever have **enough** faith?

Is there such a thing as **too much** faith?

How much faith is enough?

It is hard to talk about faith without talking about quantity:

- hard for us;
- hard for the disciples who wanted more.

To this talk about quantity of faith, Jesus responded something like this:

“All right, since you are worried about more or less, much or little,
let’s take the smallest, tiniest quantity anyone can imagine. . .

Let us say the quantity of faith you **already have** is as small . . .

as small as,

a seed!”

For what Jesus said was:

“If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this . . . tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” (17:5-6)

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”

And so have we said to our Lord, in many different ways!

“Lord, just give me strength to get through this!”

“Lord deepen my faith so I can understand your will.”

“Lord, if our church only had more members, think what we could do.”

“Lord, if my faith were only greater.”

“Lord !

Sound familiar?

Have you been there?

Have you heard yourself say those words?

Or words like them?

Have you ever, in one way or another, heard yourself ask along with the apostles, “Increase our faith!”?

What do you suppose the apostles were assuming **about themselves** when they asked the Lord to increase their faith?

Were they assuming:

-- that they had **some** faith, but not enough?

-- that **more** faith would be better than the amount of faith they already had?

-- that faith is something one can measure:

depth of,

greatness of,

strength of faith?

Will they know when they have enough?

Increase our faith!

Let me tell you a story – a parable –

a parable about a young woman who wanted to get married.

She wanted to get married in the worst way!

So when the “man of her dreams” proposed, she said “yes” without hesitation,

and they were wed.

He was handsome, intelligent, witty.

Their friends observed, “Here is a marriage made in heaven.”

Unfortunately, the bliss did not last.

Gradually in day-to-day living, certain imperfections emerged.

He was handsome, but not always, especially not before eight in the morning!

Then he could look downright ugly!

He was intelligent, but not as successful as she at first thought.

The promised adventure led to nothing more exciting than washing the dishes and doing the laundry.

Then there were his relatives from out of town, come to visit ----

and, HE SNORED!

Slowly, but surely, she found herself growing cool to this man.

Marriage was different than she dreamed it would be, and she wanted **more!**

Oh, he could be romantic on a Saturday night, dancing into the wee hours,

but marriage was not all like that.

Marriage was cornflakes for breakfast,
 disagreements over finances,
 those out-of-town relatives,
 she wanted **more!**

More romance,

more income,

more adventure,

(and, of course, he snored!)

She wanted more, for **what she had was not enough.**

For some of us all of the time, and the rest of us some of the time, what we have is not enough:

not enough money,

or praise,

success,
 love,
 or adventure;
 not enough faith.

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."

And the Lord said:

"If you had faith the size of a grain of mustard seed"

As a small child I remember hearing this verse in Sunday School.

When no one was watching, I went outside, faced a great old oak, and said:

"Tree ----- move!"

"Well, so much for that! Guess I don't have enough faith!"

"If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this tree. . ."

Doesn't that make you feel **deficient** in faith?

A grain of mustard seed, and you could do miracles!

Have you moved any tree's lately?

Does that mean Jesus is telling us we **do not have even the tiniest little amount of faith?**

Does Jesus want us to feel guilty – be ashamed -- that we cannot muster even such a little bit of faith?

Let us consider another possibility.

Let us ask if Jesus might be saying something very different indeed than that!

Since Jesus' apostles were so concerned about whether they had enough faith, what if Jesus, in an ironic response to what he considered their misplaced concern, took the smallest quantity he could think of.

Then what if he said:

Look here – even the **tiniest** quantity of faith that can be found in a human life, faith small as a mustard seed, even **this tiniest quantity** of faith defies nature,

goes against all your experience and defies nature!

Even such a **tiny** quantity of faith leads us to acts so far beyond human expectation.

The least little amount of faith possible does this – so why would you want more?

The tiniest amount of faith a person can possibly have, faith like a mustard seed, is enough!

If that is what Jesus is saying, then we are wasting time asking for more

-- for we already have all we need.

Is there really much doubt in your mind about what Jesus is saying?

Every single time throughout the Gospels, when Jesus talks about our yearnings for more, bigger, greater – it is only to suggest to us that our concern with quantity is not a concern God shares!

The farmer who built bigger barns.

The king who gave a big party.

The disciples asking to be “greatest.”

--- all came up short in the hands of God who rejoices in:

The sufficiency of the widow’s mite.

The awareness of a sparrow falling.

The value of a single lost lamb.

And faith the size of a mustard seed,

the tiniest amount of faith

such as ordinary folks as you and I might even find in ourselves,

poor as we think we are in things like faith!

And Jesus would say to us: “It is enough.”

In our parable of the new bride and the husband who snored,

the ending is not yet clear.

But that is the way of parables

-- they force us to find the ending in ourselves.

The bride was looking for something:

something world shaking,

something dream fulfilling,

-- and she could not see it in her marriage.

Could not see how it could be.

Jesus might say to this bride:

“It’s all around you – what you are looking for. **You have it already.** The love that brought you to marriage is solid rock. Your dreams are like mists that vanish in the light of day.”

Can she discern the love she has already been given?

Will it be enough?????

Sometimes we look at a person who has had great trouble in their life and say:

“What great faith they have!”

We admire them.

We don’t know how we could ever face what they have faced!

Great faith!

But they are **not**, you know, people of **greater** faith.

There is simply faith.

Not greater.

Not less.

Just faith!

Their faith, my faith, your faith.

When we gush at them about their great faith (those who have lived through tragic times and triumphed), they will generally deny it.

“My faith is no greater than anyone else’s.
I just never knew what I had until I needed it.”

“Faith the size of a mustard seed, and you could say to this tree. . . . and it would obey you.”

It is enough.

God has already given you enough.

The issue is not **more** faith, but how we live our everyday lives out of the faith we have already been given.

The faith God has given us – every one of us.

God has given us enough.

Enough strength, enough hope, enough faith,

to do all that God calls us to do.

To face whatever we must face.

To always want more, to think we need more, is a good way to rationalize doing **nothing** with what we already have!

God does not want us wallowing in guilt or remorse over what we don’t have,

frozen, unable to act, saying:

“If only I had more, think what I could do!”

God wants us to be active, generous, wasteful even – with what we’ve been given.

Like the widow with her mite.

Like the shepherd leaving the ninety nine for the one lost sheep.

Like the Son of God dying that we might have life.

“Increase our faith.”

NO!!

God has given us faith, and it is enough.

Faith small as the size of a mustard seed.

It is enough.

You might not know it yet. You might not know you have it until you need it.

But it is enough.

Thanks to God for such faith, such a **little** amount of faith, which can move the world.

Thanks be to God.

Amen