

FAITH @ HOME

Week of October 6, 2019

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Luke 17:5-10

REFLECT: Children and adults both rarely seem to have enough; we always yearn for something we don't possess. It might be something tangible like a toy a child saw at a friend's house or a new car that a colleague recently purchased. Or, it could be less concrete like a particular skill or talent we see in a friend. Jesus' followers were no different. On their journey to Jerusalem, the disciples worry they don't possess enough faith to accompany Jesus. They shout to him, "Increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5, NRSV) Jesus responds by telling them that what they have is already enough. If his followers would celebrate the faith they already possess, they could uproot trees with a few simple words.

RESPOND: Most children (and even adults!) are not familiar with mustard seeds, so focus instead on something more accessible. Take a walk outside to search for acorns, which are starting to fall this time of year. Discuss its size and shape, and then point to the giant oak tree it will one day become. If you don't live near oak trees, this activity could be replicated by collecting different types of seeds or even cutting up fruit to look at the seeds within it. All of these seeds are tiny compared to the plant that bore it and the plant it could one day become.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ALLISON LILES



The Rev. Allison Sandlin Liles is a wife, mother, peacemaker, and priest learning to navigate life in the suburban wilds of Dallas, Texas. After working as Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Executive Director for six years, Allison has re-entered parish ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth. She currently serves as the Priest-in-Charge of St Stephen's Episcopal Church in Hurst, Texas and the editor of Grow Christians (www.growchristians.org), a ministry of Forward Movement.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Luke 17:5-10

REFLECT: We live in a world that asks us to go for “more.” We see ads on the Internet or on TV that persuade us to get more: more toys, more food, more trips around the world. The next time you go to the grocery store, take a count of how many items have the words “*now with 60% more*” on the label. We are led to think that we never have enough, even if we do.

In this reading from Luke, the disciples tell Jesus to increase their faith. How does Jesus respond? By saying that they only need to have faith the size of a mustard seed, and they could move a mulberry tree! Mustard seeds are tiny; you can barely see one if you hold it in your hand. Jesus is telling his disciples that they don’t need to have a lot of faith in order to make a difference in the world. God does incredible things with only a small amount of faith! What matters is that we build a strong relationship with God, so that our tiny amount of faith is strong. We do this through prayer, worship, learning about God and stories in the Bible, and being a part of a faith community. We don’t need “more” faith; instead, we need to have a faith in God that lasts and helps us through the good times, and the bad.

RESPOND: Get a packet of small seeds. Plant the seeds in a cup or a pot. Put your seeds in a place where you can take care of them daily and watch them grow. As you watch your seeds grow, think about the ways that you can grow and strengthen your own relationship with God.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: VICTORIA HOPPES



Victoria Hoppes is the Camp Director at Waycross Camp and Conference Center and the Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis. She has ministry experience with youth, family, and camping programs at both the parish and diocesan levels. She holds degrees from Texas Lutheran University and Luther Seminary. She also holds a certificate in Youth and Family Ministry from Forma’s certificate program. You can follow Victoria on her website, www.ministryincontext.com, or on social media (@vlhoppes).

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Luke 17:5-10

REFLECT: When the disciples asked Jesus how to increase their faith, he tells them if they had faith as small as a mustard seed, they could move a giant mulberry tree. He continues by asking them how they would treat a slave or servant, knowing they would have expectations of the slaves and would not thank them for their service. Then, Jesus puts them in the perspective of the slave, and points out that in this context, they would have done exactly what was expected of them.

In this Scripture reading, Jesus sounds a little annoyed with the disciples and suggests they should not expect praise for their service. With that said, what if Jesus asks the disciples (and us) what they want for their service? Faith can become an accomplishment or reward on its own. With God's grace, discipleship does not require unshakable faith or amazing feats, but instead sometimes requires ordinary service and practices.

RESPOND: What are the kind of things you do to build your relationship with God? Specifically, what are the ordinary things you do? Talk with your family or friends about times during your schedule that you could make extraordinary by devoting it towards God. Create a new spiritual practice around worshipping God while you ride the bus to school, walk to class, drive to work, etc, and share it with your loved ones so they can encourage you to continue your spiritual practice.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: WALLACE BENTON



Wallace Benton serves as the Assistant to the Rector for Youth Ministries at St. David's Episcopal Church in Roswell, GA. He's been fortunate to have grown up in the Episcopal Church and became interested in youth ministry after volunteering with his former youth program after college. Wallace has worked diocesan retreats and activities such as New Beginnings and Happening. Currently, he is the lay director for New Beginnings in the Diocese of Atlanta. He is also a member of the Episcopal Youth Ministry in ATL podcast (which you should check out immediately!).

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Luke 17:5-10

REFLECT: “Increase our faith!” the apostles said to Jesus. Why? Why did they want their faith increased? Was it the cry of tired, dusty, wavering people who had left everything to follow this man with hopes and dreams for revolution that might end the oppression of the Romans in their midst? Were they frustrated? Or, were they energized and inspired? Had they been listening to the parables and teachings and thought “I know I’m missing something here, perhaps I need more faith to get the pieces to come together - and then we’ll make this happen!”

What would increased faith mean for them? I’m not sure they were hoping to uproot mulberry trees. My guess would be that like us, they were trying to make sense of the world around them, what they were experiencing and what they were learning and how God - and now Jesus - fit into it all.

This is familiar to us as Christians venturing into our lives trying to make them mean something, while coping with the daily stress of life and the regular occurrences of violent acts and violent speech that we’re surrounded with. We long to understand why, we long to understand where and how God and faith fit in these scenarios. We read our Scriptures, we tend to our rituals, and we believe that if we just keep our faith, it will be OK, even if we’re not quite sure what OK is.

Maybe the apostles eventually came to understand that faith cannot be increased with a wave of the hand. Our faith is increased only through the life we live: Prayer by prayer, hymn by hymn, teaching by teaching, sacred meal by sacred meal, act of service by act of service.

RESPOND: What activities remind you of why you have faith? This week, choose one and engage it intentionally. Observe what it is specifically that encourages you - can you articulate that and share it with a friend?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: REGINA HEATER



Regina Heater is a self-avowed and practicing ecumenist, story-collector and story-sharer. By day, she literally helps people with their smiles in her work as a dental office manager. The rest of the time she’s exploring how to do faith online, from creating and posting prayers (#PrayersForDaysThatEndInY) to participating in and moderating Twitter-based communities such as #SlateSpeak and #InterfaithChat. Connect with her at www.reginaheater.com.

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