**The Collect and Gospel Reading appointed for the 16th Sunday after Trinity**

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers
of your people who call upon you;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**A Reading from St Luke’s Gospel, chapter 17, verses 5-10**

The apostles said to the Lord,

“Increase our faith!”

He replied,

“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.

“Suppose one of you had a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep.

Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field,

‘Come along now and sit down to eat’?

Would he not rather say,

‘Prepare my supper,

get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink;

after that you may eat and drink’?

Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?

So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do,

should say,

‘We are unworthy servants;

we have only done our duty.’”

***Pause for Thought…***

In the middle chapters of his Gospel, Luke paints a background of constant conflict and we’re never far from the threat of more to come. The Twelve, of course, must have been all too aware

of how much things were hotting up for Jesus. They must surely have picked up the increasing tension levels and the ever-greater note of urgency in everything Jesus had to say to them. Suddenly, following Jesus, spending time with him, listening to him, wasn’t quite as much fun

as it used to be. Things were starting to get rather more serious – and the disciples weren’t

at all sure how to deal with that.

So no wonder, given the context, that the first verse of our reading from Luke finds Jesus’ friends making this earnest request of Jesus - ***“Lord, increase our faith!”***

The disciples can plainly see the way things are going and they know they’re going to need every bit of faith they can get their hands on – trouble is brewing, and they recognise their need for faith as they fearfully face the difficulties and dangers ahead. So they ask Jesus for more.

But Jesus’ reply to them – perhaps not surprisingly as he must be feeling the pinch too –

is quite short and rather sharp –

***“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.”***

The disciples don’t need ***more*** faith – they just need to use ***what they’ve already got***.

Even the tiniest amount of faith can work wonders, Jesus tells them, so why do you need *more*? You’ve already got everything you need, says Jesus, ***so just get on with it!***

And then Jesus illustrates his point with a parable…

***“Suppose one of you had a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep.***

***Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field,***

***‘Come along now and sit down to eat’?***

***Would he not rather say,***

***‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink;***

***after that you may eat and drink’?***

Or to put it another way…

***Would you expect a slave to come in from work and say “I’m worn out!”***

***and then collapse onto the sofa in front of the telly…***

***or would you just expect him to get on with his job?***

Put it like that and the answer is obvious.

The disciples should stop worrying about what they have or haven’t got.

They should forget how tired or worried or fearful they might or might not be.

They should get on with the job in hand.

They should do what they’re there to do.

The faith they have **now** is easily enough for them.

**They’ve got as much faith as they need. They just need to *use* it.**

**Our** faith may be small, we may wish it was greater, we might wish we had more of it,

but for the specific tasks to which **we** have been called by Jesus,

**however much faith we’ve got** **will be enough** –

as we’ll prove **if we’ll just get on with the job.**

As one of the most faith-full Christian teachers I know once said,

***It’s not great faith that you need…it’s faith in a great God.***