



Sunday

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity / Feast of St Francis

Gospel Reading

Luke 17.5-10

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' ⁶The 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.'

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!"'

Other Readings: Lamentations 1.1-6

Canticle: Lamentations 3.19-26 or Psalm 137

2 Timothy 1.1-14

Homily

As Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem, he is preparing his disciples for what is to come: his rejection; suffering; and death.

Along the way, he is also teaching them about the qualities that are required in following him. These are qualities that they must both model in their own lives and teach to others who want to follow Jesus. Today's passage immediately follows some teaching about *forgiveness* (Lk 17:1-6) and leads on from there into a discussion of *faithfulness* (Lk 17:5-10). The two are connected because it is in response to Jesus' instructions about forgiveness that the disciples say: 'Lord, increase our faith'.

Both forgiveness and faithfulness are demanding – they don't grow of their own accord. What is required to ensure that they grow in us so that we, like Jesus, become forgiving and faithful servants of the Father? You might say love, or even humility, and you wouldn't be wrong. But I think the disciples were right to sense that faith is the key. It takes a living faith to be obedient to the commands of Jesus and forgive others. It takes a living faith to be faithful in good times and bad.

In forgiving others, we demonstrate that we are trusting God to take care of the consequences and work out everything to the good and His glory. As a child, many parents would tell their child off for their wrong doings, we might recognise within us the child who says "I'm sorry" with a petulant sulk! As mature Christians we know that true forgiveness is not a cheap exchange of words. It involves pain because someone has been hurt and there is a price to pay in healing the wound. Love *motivates* us to forgive but faith *activates* that forgiveness so that God can use it to bless His people and to His praise and glory.

Regardless of our political opinions, we may find an example of this in the words of Erika Kirk as she gave tribute to her murdered husband, Charlie Kirk. At his funeral, she spoke of God's love and publicly forgave his killer. An estimated 100 million viewers heard those words of forgiveness. Many have been inspired to explore faith in Jesus as a result. Human nature being what it is, it would have been much easier to go against the command of Jesus and burn with hatred and anger. But who would that have blessed? True forgiveness of a hurt so deep comes about when we know the love of God and have faith.

The mustard seed of faith is tiny, but it has *life* in it and therefore it can grow. If our faith is living, it too will grow, enabling us to be obedient to God's commands. Faith grows through a deepening relationship and dependency on God who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). Not many of us would feel confident in trying to plant a mulberry bush in the sea! But, if we look to the Spirit of God whose power is revealed in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, we will find ourselves empowered to live a life of faithfulness, forgiveness and love as we wait for Christ's return. This was the charge that Paul gave to Timothy, encouraging him to live faithfully, relying on the power of God (1 Tim 1:8) as he guarded the gospel entrusted into his care with "the help of the Holy Spirit living in us." (1 Tim 1:14)

Faith looks both to what God *has* done and what God *will* do, enabling us to live our present lives faithfully in the power of the Spirit. It's not so much the power of our own faith that matter, but the power of the one in whom we place our faith.

Conversation Questions

1. How will you live by faith today? What problems, challenges and temptations might come your way?
2. Are struggling with forgiveness? Maybe it's difficult to forgive a particular person. What steps might you take to resolve that?
3. What practical steps might you take to grow your faith by walking more closely with the Lord? Perhaps your daily Bible reading and prayer life needs a "kick start." Might you pair up with a friend to encourage one another?
4. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
5. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*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.*

(or)

*Lord of creation,
whose glory is around and within us:
open our eyes to your wonders,
that we may serve you with reverence
and know your peace at our lives' end,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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