

27th Sunday 2016

Habakkuk 1:2-3, 2:2-4; 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14; Luke 17:5-10

When we come to church, we hear a lot talk about faith. We read about faith in the Bible and we sing songs about faith, but what is faith? When we say that we have faith, it means that we believe something is true, even when we can't see it. I heard a story that might help us to understand it better.

One day, a little girl got lost in the woods on a farm near where she lived. The farmer who owned the land found the little girl and said to her, "Don't be afraid; I'll take you home."

The little child looked up at him, and with a smile, said, "I'm not afraid. I knew you would come; I was waiting for you."

"Waiting for me?" said the man. "What made you think I was coming?"

"I was praying that you would." she said.

"You were praying?" the farmer asked. "When I first heard you, you were just saying 'A B C D E F G.' What was that for?"

She looked up again and said, "I wasn't sure exactly what to say, so I was praying all the letters of the alphabet and letting God put them together the way He wanted them. He knew I was lost and he knew how to put the letters together better than I do."

Even though the little girl could not see God, she had faith that he loved her and cared for her. She had faith that if she asked him to help her, he would.

How much faith is enough? Do we need to have a lot of faith, or will just a little bit do? The answer may surprise you.

The followers of Jesus said to him one day, "Lord, increase our faith." Jesus answered and said, "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." Can you imagine what it would be like to have that kind of faith?

A man who read this verse in the Bible and decided to put it to the test. There was a large tree in his front yard, so he went out to that tree and said, "In the morning when I wake up from my sleep, I want you to be gone." That night the man went to bed. When he woke up the next morning, he went to front door, opened it, and looked out into his front yard. "Just as I thought!" the man said. "It's still there."

Well, first of all, the man didn't have mustard seed sized faith, did he? In fact, he didn't have any faith at all. When he told the tree to be moved, he never expected it to happen. In the second place, I think that the man misunderstood what Jesus was trying to teach his disciples.

Jesus was not suggesting that you and I go around trying to move trees just to prove that we have faith. What Jesus was trying to teach his disciples -- and what he wants you and me to learn -- is that it doesn't take a great faith to produce great results. Why? Because the results don't depend on us, they depend on God. If the results depended on the size of our faith, I have no doubt that we would probably go around bragging about our great faith.

Don't ask for a great faith so that we can do great things -- ask for faith the size of a mustard seed so that we can see God do great things!

In that spirit, let us close with these words of Cardinal Newman, written during a period of faith darkness:

Lead kindly, Light. . . . Lead Thou me on! The night is dark, and I am far from home; . . . I do not ask to see The distant scene; one step [is] enough for me.

Dear Father, we ask for a mustard seed sized faith. Help us to believe and never doubt your mighty power. Amen.