



TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

OCTOBER 5, 2025

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

The apostles said to Jesus, "Increase our faith."

But Jesus says no. He refuses! Why would Jesus ever refuse a request for more faith? What's going on here? Let's find out.

When the disciples ask for increased faith, Jesus points to a nearby mulberry tree. "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed," Jesus responds, "you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea.'" Perhaps he's saying something like this: "Guys, you're asking the wrong question! It's not that you don't have enough faith. The problem is that you aren't using the faith you already have!"

I think we can see ourselves in the disciples. When things aren't going right for us, we think the problem is that we lack something. We need more of something.

But maybe that's not our problem. Maybe our problem is that we already have what we need. We're just not using it. If that's what Jesus means, it makes sense of the strangely harsh parable Jesus tells next, about slaves who should do their full day's work before they get their dinner break. In other words, if you're just doing your job, don't expect a standing ovation and a huge trophy.

What are the apostles talking about prior to this refusal by Jesus? They were asked to forgive those who had wronged them. And that, I think, helps us make sense of Jesus's strange and fascinating refusal of the disciples' request. When the disciples say, "Give us more faith," they're saying, "We can't forgive others, especially those who keep failing us. To do that, we need more faith." And Jesus responds, responds, "If you had even a tiny bit of faith, you could do amazing things, unbelievable things. So, stop asking for more faith, and start doing what you can already do with the faith you have!"

What does that mean for us today? Is there someone we need to forgive? Then just do it. Do it now. Do it because it's right. Do it because we can. Stop making excuses. Let's get specific. Is there some group of people you are prejudiced against? Some group of people you assume the worst about—Democrats? Republicans? Russians? Or maybe our prejudice is racial, or class-oriented, or related to sexual orientation?

What if we heard Jesus say, "Enough. No more excuses. Get over it and let go of your grudge. Choose compassion instead of critique. Choose mercy instead of judgment. The problem isn't those other guys. The problem is you. The problem isn't that you can't forgive. It's that you won't. So, now's the time."

The prophet Habakkuk knew that faith isn't simply a matter of lofty spiritual feelings. It's a down-to-earth matter of survival. When he says, "The just one who is righteous because of faith shall live," he's saying, "The righteous will survive by their faith." Like us, Habakkuk lived in a violent time.

Jesus is telling us the way to get more faith isn't simply to ask for it. The way to get more faith is to use the little we already have by putting it into action. Otherwise, we're just playing a religious game and wasting both Jesus's time and our own.

A good lesson for all of us.

Source for the idea: *Thirsty, and You Gave Me Drink*; Homilies and Reflections for Cycle C, Brian McLaren. Clear Faith Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Prayer: Bringing Home the Word