



Luke 17:5-10

5 The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' **6** The Lord replied, 'Were your 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 'Which of you, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, would say to him when he returned from the fields, "Come and have your meal immediately"? **8** Would he not be more likely to say, "Get my supper laid; make yourself tidy and wait on me while I eat and drink. You can eat and drink yourself afterwards"? **9** Must he be grateful to the servant for doing what he was told? **10** So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, "We are merely servants: we have done no more than our duty".'

Other readings: Habakkuk 1:2-3, 2:2-4 Psalm 94 (95) 2 Timothy 1:6-8,13-14

We continue reading teachings of Jesus as he makes his way to Jerusalem. There are two themes in these verses: faith and service. In both cases Jesus seems to be giving a warning about great expectations in the life of discipleship. We are not called upon to be high achievers in the life of faith and love.

We are not told why the apostles suddenly ask Jesus to help their lack of faith. Jesus' reply is striking and hardly encouraging. The mustard seed, as Jesus teaches elsewhere, is the smallest of the seeds. Astonishingly, Jesus implies that the apostles do not have faith even that small. If they did, then they could do extraordinary wonders. Perhaps what Jesus is teaching is that faith is part of a completely different order, in which different rules apply. The desire for faith, the sense that one's faith needs to increase, is already something precious. The presence of God in a person's life is more important than striving for a deeper faith.

A short parable follows. The true disciple is to look upon himself as a 'useless servant'. This is the literal translation of verse 10. This would surely have sounded strange to many of the disciples of Jesus. Once again the words of Jesus are challenging. Is it right that we should consider whatever we do simply as a duty? The point here is to realise that God does not demand huge achievements from us. To seek to serve is all that is necessary, for Jesus himself came to serve and not to be served. The love of God in a person's life is far more important than striving for great achievements even in the service of God.

Does faith in God lie at the very heart of my life?

Am I content to be a 'useless servant'?

Let us pray for openness to the words of Jesus, especially when they challenge us and perplex us.

Let us pray for the gifts of true faith and true love.