

October 2, 2022
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." The Lord replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

"Who among you would say to your servant, who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

Background:

There are just five verses between the gospel from last week, the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the text for this week. In those five verses Jesus addresses the disciples about the inevitability of sin. Despite sin's inevitability, its consequences are still tragic, especially if it leads others to sin. Therefore, Jesus urges the disciples to confront the sinner so that he can turn away from the sin. But the one who falls should be forgiven, seven times a day if need be. Following these teachings Jesus addresses the disciples with the passage that is the gospel text for this week.

The gospel contains two of Jesus' instructions. The first is about faith that might be better understood as loyalty. The apostles asked for an increase in faith. Jesus' response moves the request from the quantity to the quality of faith. The seed of the mustard tree is very small, but the mulberry tree has an extensive root system that makes it very difficult to transplant.

The second teaching is a parable centered on the role of a single house servant as a model for discipleship. Family servants were common in the time of Jesus. Even a poor family would have one servant who performed multiple tasks, working in the fields, caring for the house, and preparing meals. At the time of Jesus, the poorest families would give one or two of their children to another family as a servant so that the child might have sufficient food.

In order for us to hear Jesus' instruction to his disciples in a way that will be meaningful, the reader may need to be aware of our cultural biases. Most of us would struggle to think of a world where parents would give their children to another as servants so that they would have sufficient food. Equally troubling may be the thought of a master who would require a person who has labored in fields all day to then come in and cook and serve a meal. As disturbing as these thoughts may be, these conditions existed in the time of Jesus, as they do in different parts of our world today.

The task for this week is to both listen to our response in reaction to the situation presented in the gospel and respond in a way that is appropriate for our situation, and at the same time listen to the parable with the ears and hearts of the disciples who are asking Jesus to help them with their apparent lack of faith. We also need to hear Jesus' response as truly trying to respond to them and their need.

Reflection Questions:

1. Are you aware of a time in your life when your faith seemed abundant? Are you also aware of a time when your faith seemed thin or maybe not-existent?
2. To what would you compare your faith? What would be a good symbol?
3. What are the things you considered as you examined your faith? (personal prayer/relationship, adherence to beliefs, faithful living of commitments, living justly with others and creation, and/or any others?)
4. If you look at your faith in terms of an expression of loyalty, what happens within you?

5. Do you ever find you get quantity confused with quality in your relationships?
6. What do you think Jesus was trying to teach the disciples about their role as disciples?
7. Can you take some time to talk with God about your desire to be a faithful servant, or your awareness of God who desires in Jesus to manifest Godself and his faithful servant?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclalledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for October 2, 2022, the Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

How long, O Lord? I cry for help but you do not listen!
I cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not intervene.
Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery?
Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and clamorous discord.
Then the Lord answered me and said:
Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily.
For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint;
if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.
The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live.

*If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving, and joyfully sing psalms to him.
Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the Lord who made us.
For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds.
Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me; they tested me though they had seen my works."*

Beloved: I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have.
For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather of power and love and self-control.
So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake;
but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God.
Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are
in Christ Jesus. Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." The Lord replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. "Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

Excerpts from Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9; 2 Timothy 1:6-14; and Luke 17:5-10

From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for October 2nd, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the gospel from Luke, the apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith. In reply, he tells them how just a little faith can do great things: "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to a mulberry tree, be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you." He then goes on to add that a servant is owed no special gratitude for doing what the servant has been instructed to do.

The other readings also have references to faith in God's guidance, and the eventual rewards of putting up with hardship. In the first reading from Habakkuk, the prophet asks the Lord: "How long, oh Lord? I cry for help, but you do not intervene! Why must I look at misery and strife?" The Lord answers, "The vision still has its time; wait for it. The just one, because of his faith, shall live." Psalm 95 admonishes, "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of Massah in the desert. Let us sing joyfully, and acclaim the rock of our salvation. We are the flock he guides." In the second reading, from the second letter to Timothy, Paul writes, "Take the gift of God in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Bear your share of the hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God."