

Message: *Kin-dom Faith*

May God's Grace and peace be with you this day!

I have in my hand today a baggie of seeds. Some are garden beans/string beans and others are mustard seeds. Think you will know which is which? I bet you will. Jesus' teaching moment today is about faith... kin-dom faith.

Did you ever have an employer say, 'I want you to apply for this position'... and you think 'really, who me? I'm not ...' That's something like the situation the disciples are in as they listen to Jesus teachings. The text from Luke's gospel follows instruction on sin and forgiveness (v1-4). If your brother/sister sins and repents, forgive. If it happens seven times over, forgive. And so the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith. And what did Jesus respond... 'if your faith is as small as a mustard seed you can say to the mulberry tree uproot & plant in the sea and it will obey' (v6). So which seeds are the mustard seeds?

So it is not about having more or less faith... you have enough AND, more importantly, God believes you are enough.

So let's look at faith. A favorite writer/theologian is Frederick Buechner...and he has a terrific book 'Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith' (HarperCollins Pub., 2004). A subtitle explains : 'A Word a Day to keep the Demons at Bay' that I use often... and receive via email from the Writing Center. Buechner reminds us that Faith is 'assurance of things hoped for, conviction of things unseen (Heb 11:1). He goes on to suggest that Faith is more verb than noun, a process rather than a possession. It looks a lot like 'not being sure of where you're going, but going anyway' (109).

If we think of this, then perhaps the example of the servant makes a bit of sense... that faith is simply the willingness to do what needs to be done. Faith is not, in other words, a scarce resource that needs to be saved, spent, added to, and all the rest. Moreover, faith isn't always heroic. Indeed, it usually isn't, but instead is simply and humbly doing what needs to be done, big or small, great or mundane, just because it needs doing.

This isn't the first time Jesus has hinted at this. At this point in Luke's Gospel, Jesus has already named as faithful a woman's desperate confidence that if she only touches the hem of his garment she will be healed (3:48), a Roman centurion's concern for a sick servant (7:9), and a woman's gratitude at being forgiven (7:50). Soon he will also call faithful a Samaritan leper who returns to thank him for healing (17:19) and the plea of a blind beggar for sight (18:42). Therefore it makes sense that Jesus challenges the disciples' understanding of faith by pointing them to the far from glamorous hard work and service of a servant performing his duties. Faith is found not in the mighty acts of heaven but in the ordinary and everyday acts of doing what needs to be done, responding to the needs around us, and caring for the people who come our way.

And this is the crux of the encouragement in the first reading... the faith that has brought Timothy to this point of leadership has been lived out in his mother and grandmother... and passed on... not so much in words, but in the activity of faithful living. We are reminded to revive this gift which is in each of us.

Friends, that is what brings us here today...faith. We gather in faith...

In this place we are reminded of who we are and whose we are. In this place we are reminded that we are loved by God and we are called to love one another in community.

We gather this particular day, World Communion Sunday, to remember that we are not alone... this world gathers to celebrate our faith in God through the saving act of Jesus and the empowerment of Holy Spirit.

We gather around the table to which we are called and to which we are promised a place at the table.

We celebrate our common faith that God's love overcomes sin and death, and restores us to new life through Christ.

And it all starts with common everyday stuff, bread & juice. In some places the bread will be wafers, or pita bread, or loaf-like bread. The juice may not be grape juice (because grapes aren't available), but another juice or wine that is common. The point is, we remember the simple gifts used to be signs of faith in the act of faith demonstrated by Jesus...obedience to God's will that we are enough... God's faith in us to respond to the offer of love and life. Jesus died for us, suffering and dying like us so that we too would respond with faith in God. Faithful living is doing the everyday things of loving God and loving others.

I bet we can live like that... I can try, at least, to love God and others by serving and doing what needs to be done.

It might look like writing a note to say I'm thinking of you. It might look like signing up for a workshop on human trafficking or for lay servant training. It might be baking for the event in three weeks or bringing food for the food pantry... or Showing up for work and doing a good job. Listening when someone needs to talk. Getting the kids off to school. Sitting with someone in the cafeteria who looks like they could use a friend. Volunteering at a local homeless shelter. Voting even if the field of candidates seems discouraging. Balancing the books for your business or community group. Writing a thank you note to someone who has done a kindness. Cooking supper. Praying for a neighbor who is having a hard time. The list could go on. Acts of faith are not costly or extravagant. That is a misconception. You are faithful people...I've witnessed it in the short time I've been with you. So know this... you are enough to do whatever God is calling you to do. God sent Jesus to remind us of the promise, and the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us.

As you respond to the invitation to receive the bread and juice today,

look at your hands...see the touch and tenderness to be shared in the world.

Look at your feet... see the path and direction to be taken in the world.

Look at your heart...see the fire and love of God to be shared in the world.

Look at the cross...see the God's love and promise for you. That's kin-dom faith. Amen.

Amen.