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Sunday, October 5, 2025
Hospital Spiritual Health Practitioner
Kamloops, BC
Prepared for ELCIC Sermons by Email
Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4
Psalm 37:1-9
2 Timothy 1:1-14
Luke 17:5-10

“This sermon has been prepared by Pastor Jane Gingrich who serves as the Spiritual Health Practitioner (or Chaplain) for Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops in BC”

Luke 17:5-10

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” ⁶The Lord replied, “If you had 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“Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’? ⁸Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink’? ⁹Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’” (NRSV)

There is comfort in knowing that we do not create faith.

It is also comforting to that faith is not able to be bought and sold- nor traded nor credited.

Faith is God's **gift** to us that God has made for us through the Holy Spirit.

Faith cannot be taken away.

Faith cannot be packaged up into individual serving sizes,
and it is not possible to have too much faith.

There can be no thieves with faith;

and not only must we come to faith through Christ,

but we can't even create faith for ourselves.

then, finally: Faith is not earned.

[pause]

With this understanding in mind, the Reformers of more than 500 years ago would say that true confession of faith begins like this:

“I believe that I cannot believe... Lord, help my unbelief”

Only God’s Word can create faith.

only God’s Word can call us into Christ.

and when we have faith, at last, we might even realize the truth about our own ideas-

Faith is not a system of power or rewards.

In a world that has a tendency to tell us that success is control, power, and financial gain;

[speak slowly for next line]

faith calls us to self - control, service, self - offering.

[pause]

Yet, still, having greater faith does not make us better than other people.

We are not to be served by our neighbours. *We are called to serve neighbours.*

So, then, what does faith **do** for us?

I work in a hospital and this can be a challenging question in times of suffering.

Often I have heard,

“but I’ve been such a good person, why is this happening to me?”

Or

“I thought I did all the right things, why is God doing this to me?”

It would seem that the disciples, and *we ourselves at times*, are calling out to our Creator: “Increase our faith!”

...but why?

Jesus’ response to his disciples isn’t so much about their amount of faith,

but what faith can do.

[longer pause]

And – I’m sorry if this spoils your reasons for being in church;

but **our** reasons for faith, aren’t necessarily the same as Jesus’ action in us

through faith.

We are saved by grace, through faith

not from everything around us;

but in order to see and live-into God’s activity

for all the world.

Life is a challenge.

Whether you are a newborn gasping for that first breath;

A four-year-old trying to make your adults understand what you're saying;

A teenager wishing things were different;

A university student worrying about loans;

An employee questioning your legal requirements;

An elder facing health changes;

Or whether you are at any stage in between and it's a good day today-

Life is hard.

Jesus didn't say that it wouldn't be.

Jesus didn't say life would be easy.

But somehow, when we think of control, power and financial gain, we think it will be easier – and if faith is part of that realm, then we will be disappointed, harmed, and feel that our faith isn't working very well on a regular basis.

Instead, faith offers us eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to listen.

Self-control, service, self-offering.

Jesus' actions always aligned with these fruit of the Spirit.

It doesn't mean that was easy, pain-free, or unquestioningly straight-forward.

This fully-God, human-among us still struggled himself.

Indeed, his response to the disciples was a little bit rough-

You can hear the pointed tone in his comment:

“If you had 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.”

- *Thanks Jesus, now these disciples who are really questioning themselves as leaders feel even better about their faith...*

...then he immediately he explains himself:

We serve because we are called to do so, not because there is extra reward in power, control, or financial gain,

But because by our very faith, we are called to service, self-control, self-offering in the name of the one whose name we bear: Christ.

Nothing we do will bring us closer or further from God.

Nothing we do will bring us closer to or further from God.

The gift of God through Christ Jesus: faith - tells us that no matter what, whether we walk away, meander, or remain fervent, we are not alone.

Suffering, illness, life stages, pain – God IS here. God is always here.

God does not abandon us.

By grace, through faith we have been saved.

The GIFT in all this is visible in each other.

You are not alone.

God lives in us- and through you, God is active and alive in the world.

Today, always.

May it be so.