

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Lamentations 3:19-26  
Psalm 37:1-9  
2 Timothy 1:1-9a  
Luke 17:1-6

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Grace and peace to you all from God – our strength and our redeemer - Amen.

At first glance, it seems like the disciples in our gospel lesson this morning simply don't get it. They appear to think that faith is something they can quantify, control, or trade-in to somehow gain the enlightenment they feel they need to follow Jesus.

And while they may seem lost in how faith comes to work in our lives and world - the disciples do seem to grasp that they will need a lot of it if they are going to follow the teachings Jesus has just given them.

After all, it is in this 17th chapter of Luke that we hear one of the more difficult teachings of Jesus: the call for his followers to forgive one another - not just once or twice, but up to seven times a day.

No wonder Jesus disciples ask for more faith to get them through - faced with such a teaching - *who wouldn't!*

But before we all get caught up in the art of sin counting, I need to lift up that this passage is about a lot more than simply our tendency to sin or our constant need for forgiveness in this world.

It's also about our life of faith.

And so, in the midst of Jesus teaching this morning it is important that I make something absolutely clear - as at times this passage has been used to harm people trying to faithfully live out their lives as followers of Christ.

Jesus command for us to forgive those who have sinned against us is not to be blindly obeyed at all costs.

If we listen closely to his teaching today, the act of forgiveness Jesus is calling us all to as we live as people of faith is centred in the act of true repentance within our relationships and community when it comes to our sin and pain.

So in this passage Jesus isn't talking about forgiveness in the face of ongoing trauma or abuse: as there is no repentance – or turning away from the harmful behaviour held within that unjust and abusive relationship.

If you, or someone you know and love has suffered under or has survived abuse in any of its harmful forms – know that Jesus isn't calling you this morning to blindly forgive or forget that pain – and neither am I.

Because if there is one thing we all know from spending any amount of time on this earth – it's that forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting the pain we have come to hold - and forgiveness certainly doesn't cause the automatic renewal of our broken relationships here and now.

After all, Jesus bore the scars of his crucifixion well into his resurrection within this world - even as he worked to bring about reconciliation between us and God. And as many of us have come to know – by the scars of our own relationships - that to truly forgive someone who has hurt or harmed us in some way takes not only a lot of work on our part and theirs - but it also takes faith.

Faith in God's ability to work in the midst of our brokenness.

Faith that God's will come to change not only our hearts but the hearts of those who have caused us pain.

And faith that one day we will feel whole again.

As it turns out, Jesus disciples were right in their response – forgiveness does take faith.

But what *is* faith, anyway?

Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch author who actively sheltered her Jewish neighbors during the Second World War once wrote, *"faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable, and receives the impossible."*

Martin Luther characterized faith by calling it *"a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a [person] could stake [their] life on it a thousand times."*

In our second reading this morning we also heard that faith is something that is passed down through the generations of the saints as the apostle Paul wrote in First Timothy – *“I’m reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois, then in your mother Eunice, and now, I’m certain, in you as well.”*

And finally from our gospel lesson today we hear from Jesus that if we were to have *“faith the size of a mustard seed”* – that it would be enough.

Yet, like the disciples, these are not necessarily the quotes we want to hear when we are struck by some of the self doubts we have when it comes to our faith.

In the midst of a world enamored by shocking news and viral media stories, it is easy to question our faith when it does not feel as extraordinary as others might proclaim. To be sure, there is nothing wrong with having a mountain top experience with God. But as many of us have come to find – the majority of our lives are not lived on the mountain tops of our journey of faith, they are lived out in the everyday pathways of our lives.

So like the disciples we are left asking God – how do we move forward from here? How do we live out our faith and forgive our neighbors?

We begin by listening to Jesus, who tells his followers - both then and now - that we’ve already got all that we need to be faithful, and that being faithful is simply about recognizing all the God given opportunities we are provided with to simply to show up time and time again with our unique gifts within our communities and world.

So maybe faith is heading out the door each day looking for chances to be God’s partner and co-worker within the world.

It could be that faith is imagining that the various challenges put in front of us – whether that is forgiving someone who wronged us – or working to renew broken relationships as actual possibilities that invite us to grow as followers of Christ.

Or perhaps faith is as simple as putting one foot in front of the other and walking toward a future we do see yet but trust God is fashioning all around us.

This is the life of faith that we're been invited to join each day of our lives. And today through the water and the word, the Spirit has called both Logan and Reis to be united with us in the body of Christ, anointing them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and joining them with us in God's mission for the life of the world.

A mission that asks them live among God's faithful people, and to share in Christ's Holy meal. To be nurtured in faith, prayer, and the scriptures – so that they might learn to trust God, care for others, seeking justice and peace in the world that God has made.

And these are not just the promises Reis and Logan have made today – but the promises held by all the family of faith that have come to gather here in worship and praise.

We have all been uniquely called into this common mission that we have come to share. And just like the water and the word, the bread and the wine – it is in these ordinary, yet extraordinary gifts of faith that we come to know God's love and grace we have each received within our lives.

So it is my prayer for us today – that we would come to freely share the gifts we have been given – trusting that in ordinary rhythm of our lives, no matter where our journey takes us, that God has entrusted us with every measure of faith we could ever need. And may this be so among us – Amen.