

FAITH: Try it on everything!

*“Do You Have Enough... Faith...
... An Autobiography in Five
Easy Chapters!”*

Luke 17:1-5; Lamentations 1:1-4, 6, 3:19-

26

October 6, 2019

Reflecting on Luke:

That mustard seed teaching. The way we often hear this is...if we only had enough faith...but we don't...so we can't do anything.

When, in actuality, the Greek offers a different understanding flowing from those words. You could credibly translate it:

“If you have even the tiniest amount of faith (**and you do**), you can even move trees...in other words, “you don't need me to increase your faith—use...USE even just a pinch of what you've got, and watch what can happen.” A pinch of faith will do you!

—

Now hear this reading in Lamentations. Written in the time of the exile, the author laments the destruction of his city, his temple, his way of life, the possibility for being faithful in the expected ways.

And then he makes a turn, shifts from lament to hope. Listen to this, and as you do, *allow yourself to wonder* how this passage has meaning on Peacemaking-World Communion Sunday...

Listen...

Reflect:

I wonder if we updated this Lament, might it sound like this:

How lonely sits Milwaukee, Bagdad, Rangoon...once filled with thriving people! How like a widow Milwaukee has become, once great among cities!

Milwaukee was a princess among the provinces and has become a vassal...dependent, enslaved to the mercies of county, state, federal policy.

Milwaukee weeps bitterly in the night...those shootings!
...tears on her cheeks for what is done in the dark;

among all her lovers, those who once loved the city, she has no one now to comfort and encourage her.

All her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. They're in the suburbs now...as if not connected.

Wisconsin like so many states, has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude; and finds no resting place;

her pursuers (through contrived debates and arguing which stalls) have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.

The road to Milwaukee *itself* mourns, for no one comes except to Festival Park; all her other gates are desolate, her priests groan; her young girls grieve, and Milwaukee's lot is bitter.

From Milwaukee has departed all her majesty...instead, we squabble and argue and stand still. Meanwhile, Milwaukee's princes, its young men, have become like stags that find no pasture; they flee without strength before the pursuer...there is no support for them to be courageous...

The thought of this affliction makes me feel ill at home and galls me.

My soul continually thinks of it...Really...it does!
My soul is bowed down within me.

But this I call to mind...this is where I find hope:
the steadfast love of the Lord for us never ceases,

God does not cut us off no matter what the state of our city or our souls. (As Zo said last week at Centering, we put our hope in our hope even if we struggle to feel it.)

God's mercies never come to an end...want proof?

~Every morning's coming is your proof.

~Each day is a sign of God's faithfulness...that God never gives up on us so...we don't give up on us, on Milwaukee, on peace!

Therefore hope is in God's unity with us.

The Lord is good to those who wait for him and seek him...those who slow down their life so God can catch up to and support them.

those who slow down and turn down those other voices within.

God will save you...God will save Milwaukee, Wisconsin, our nation, this world **through me, through you.**

Have hope, find your faith...don't wait!

Prompting:

Remember, the way we do anything...

The way you do anything is the way you do everything.

Listen to this autobiography in 5 short chapters...

Chapter I

I walk down the street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I fall in.

I am lost, I am helpless.

It isn't my fault.

It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter II

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I pretend I don't see it.

I fall in again.

I can't believe I am in the same place.

But it isn't my fault.

It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter III

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I see it there.

I still fall in...it's a habit.

My eyes are open.

I know where I am.

It is my fault. I get out immediately.

Chapter IV

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I walk around it.

Chapter V

I walk down a different street.

Most North Americans now live in cities (full of sidewalks!), but we're still familiar with the term "village".

"Village" evokes images of peace, contentment, community, people helping people, a less hectic way of life. Remember?

But today, all villages are global. Global villages.

"All the world" is our neighborhood now, with airline and internet access. Our way of life is ever changing.

So, do the images of village still apply, hold value?

Has our way of life come to an end?

The Lamentation text laments the destruction of a way of life.

And with this destruction, so many of us, still, are afflicted: being "ill at home", galled, seemingly hopeless.

Some “more so” than others...but all the time,
some of us lament our realities.

The Psalmist doesn't downplay his state of being or the state of the nation. We would be wise to note this!

And we are still lamenting the same things as he and more so...the loss of young people to unfathomable violence,
lost access to quality education, the loss of a thriving metropolis and individuals thriving in it, the loss of healthcare, the loss of our livelihoods...

losing out to foreign markets, better offers, those better or other educated, the more efficient.

The lament echoes in our hearts and is felt around the world!

And what echoes longest and loudest...depends...on your awareness and attitude! On your faith and hope.

The psalmist makes the turn from lament to hope when he realizes God's faithfulness to us is never daunted by the ways of humans or our choices.

God's hope is in us. The psalmist finds hope in hope.
Zo shared last week she had hope in her hope regardless of life's challenges.

Do we have...hope?

Even in the midst of personal and corporate despair?
Even as we seek peace for ourselves and others?

Even as we commune with Christians throughout the world today celebrating a new reality in us? Do we have hope?

What is and where is our hope? Where do YOU place it?

Is our hope in the universal divine energy for right relationship and justice that never ends -God?

Is that real to us?

Or real to us: the way things seem. Temporal things?
And so, we are left with little hope and little faith that things will ever be different?

But, hey! God gets it! How hard it is to be you! Sometimes hard to even find hope in...hope. Gets it! And, present. Trying to catch up to you! Slow down! Wait a minute!

Slow down with assumptions!

Let God catch up to you, your thoughts as they go a thousand miles a minute. Don't fall in that "hole" again! Listen...

The disciples get to the core of their/our fear and confusion, saying to Jesus, "Increase our faith!" as if that's their problem. As if they are ordering more faith at the drive-through window.

So...from where does faith come?
Is God in charge of dispensing faith?

I believe sometimes faith does come from God, from the inside as a gift.

Sometimes because I am filled with the awe of God's presence, I find I have faith and put myself in action.

And sometimes comes from the outside

as I note the courageous actions of others around me
and reassess situations in which I find myself...reassess my responses.

Sometimes if I act in ways "deemed" to be faithful by the earthly saints I respect (the people around me),
I find my own faith.

Faith comes both ways.

**But still, I too call out to God, especially in the dark night of the soul,
"Increase my faith!"**

I actually think what I am wanting is relief in those moments! Some rest. Or to be fixed and have it all go away!

I know intellectually there is hope
things will begin to shift for me as I live in the ways of Jesus,
I just wish I felt it, that it were easier!

Fewer holes in the sidewalk, better maps of the streets...
I want faith to eliminate life's challenges.

I want more faith as if more were needed,
as if having more faith would fill in the holes of my life.

I often feel sure I don't have faith enough to do
what I need to do! But, do I?

Jesus' response is that I have enough just the way I am.
We don't need to ask for more faith...we just need to use the faith **we do**
have...creatively, regularly,
thoughtfully!

Come on now, really, how much faith does it take to know the difference between the
things that are good for you
and not?

How much faith does it take know there are better choices for you to be making?

Not so much a matter of faith as a matter of courage,
I would say.

**And when we cannot find that courage within ourselves to live out our
mustard seed faith,**

then the faith of those around us holds us up
till we find the strength and confidence we need
to live the faith that is indeed already ours!

We've gotcha'!

**So, feeling faithless, as you walk the streets so you don't fall in any of this
world's holes!**

**So you can find a new street...
a new way to be a new you being the real you!**

Together, we are Hope! Hope lived. We have Faith.
Or is that: Faith has us?

Faith and hope! We/You have enough!

Try it on anything...and see what changes?

Remember when a small amount of faith made a difference in your life? I know it has!

**Now, try that on anything...faith leading us to integrate hope into what we
do and how we live!**

When your spouse comes home grumpy,
when the kids are riled,
when you fall over yourself and feel ridiculous...

do you act based on your faith...or is faith a mental exercise for Sunday mornings,
instead of a spiritual practicum?

Jesus' tale of the mustard seed is a word of encouragement: small acts of faith have
large consequences.

A mother's faith is the seedbed for her son's decision to become an inner-city teacher.

A father's faith is the seedbed for his son's decision not to pursue happiness in the form
of career.

A faithful modeling of "walking the talk" with our children, lays the foundation for an
adult commitment to social justice and peace.

Faith the size of a mustard seed. Hope made real.

So be on your guard! You are bound to stumble...we all are!
All those holes! But beware; we are not to be the cause of someone else's fall!

And, here's where the plight of the city and our own well-being intersect:

If someone causes someone to stumble, fall in that hole, turns away others, turns their
back on the holiness of each person...

We are to speak up! Rebuke them.
Not turn away or go silent.

We are to tell the truth in kindness.
We are to forgive them as many times as they seek a do-over/repent.

If they don't repent, well, be smart about that!

Don't cower, don't become co-dependent, don't let it stop you from acting yourself,
don't hold grudges.
Live-on with eyes wide open. Shrewdly!

Be on guard Jesus says. There's a hole in the sidewalk!

And, we are also never to give up on anyone...God doesn't!

Importantly, we are not to give up on ourselves!

You already have enough faith to do just this...if you'll use it!

Faith in yourself to be of the divine wisdom and patience...able to stay alongside and also able to know when to move on, go forward.

Not to fall into the same old ways of thinking and being.

So...How much faith do you need?

Even with the faith you now have and your current sense
of right relationship and justice,
you have enough...if you'll just use it!

On yourself! In your family.
At work and within the neighborhood.

You have enough faith to see clearly what is and to act...
in the city, in our nation's dilemmas
playing out before us in an unending news cycle.

And just below the disturbing headlines, *we know*
the issues we need to be addressing. We do.

On this World Communion Peacemaking Sunday,
we celebrate the faith we do have...and our power to act!

We remember our interconnection to the greater church and to the world...to the
Divine: one God/one breath.

And we celebrate all that can be...if we'll just do something...anything...with the faith
we have!

Will we weep with those who weep and laugh with those who laugh?

Will our own small but significant acts of faith become Christ's hands and feet in the
world?

Will we trust the power of God to kindle in our spirits power, love, and boldness?

Will we become peacemakers, sending our love, joy, power, peace into the world?

Keep the faith baby! If you keep it, try it on anything,
You can change yourself and so the world!

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