

Gospel lesson

Jesus instructs the twelve with imagery they could relate to:



picture from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mustard_seeds.JPG;
credit: Eugenio Hansen, OFS

Luke 17:5-10

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

⁶ The 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'?

⁸ Would 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'?

⁹ Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?

¹⁰ So 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!'"

The word of God for the people of God

<Children's time>

<Hymn "Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast" UMH #616>

Message: Faith to Change



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/choosing-faith/seventeenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/seventeenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Creator of the world and Lord of all people,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may help transform this world with Your love
and see the unity of Your kingdom on this earth.

Amen.

We begin "Choosing Faith" today with "Faith to Change":

"Worship is a moment in and of itself, but it connects to and feeds other moments in our lives and faith. This week - indeed, every week - [let's] focus on those connected moments."

<Interactive Time>



picture from MMMS collection

It is definitely Fall now, with leaves changing and harvesting of food. What festivals do we look forward to in this season? <Let them respond>

How is Thanksgiving traditionally celebrated?
<Let them respond>

Who is welcome at your Thanksgiving table? Who is not? <Let them respond>

Who is welcome at the Lord's table? Who might not be?
<Let them respond>

Today is World Communion Sunday. As written on the bulletin insert, "World Communion Sunday highlights the unity and diversity of the global Christian community. As we come together at the Lord's table, we celebrate our unity in Christ, joining believers around the world in Holy Communion."

How does it feel to be part of a group sharing love for one another? <Let them respond>

Do you generally feel that way out and about in our community these days, such as when you are running errands? <Let them respond>

How about on a broader scale, thinking about as our country as a whole? <Let them respond>



picture from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8860276>; by James Tissot - the-flight-of-the-prisoners Jacques Joseph Tissot, Public Domain,

The descendants of Israel during the exile were dealing with extreme stress. Their entire way of life had been upended, Jerusalem razed and the temple destroyed, in bloody battles. They were struggling to feel a sense of God, that they were part of a loving community anymore. The people mourned the kingdom that they had lost.

Anger, hatred, and a desire for revenge overwhelmed them. We heard some pretty graphic, gruesome requests in the psalm today. Do you think God was happy with those prayers? <Let them respond>

I do not think God was happy with them, but God understood where they came from. What happened to the people was terrible and traumatic. Do you think God wanted that for the people? <Let them respond>

I think sin has invaded this world so badly, that it takes a lot of work on God's part to protect us from being destroyed by the consequences of sin, whether inherited, committed by us, or committed against us.

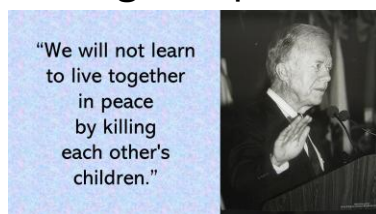
I think that was true even during the time of our Old

Testament lesson for today. So when the king and the people turned away from doing as God commanded, even after repeated warnings from the prophets, God finally stopped enabling their sin and let them experience more of the consequences of it.

Look at us today. We have been warned about ignoring Jesus's teachings and about love of money being the root of all kinds of evil, yet as more and more people choose to do so anyway, our society bears the pain of that sin.

- † We see it in the polarization of our culture instead of coming together more in community.
- † We see it in how the poor suffer more economically, and the middle class shrinks.
- † We see it in the fear of minorities to live as lawful citizens should be able to live.

We cry to God for help, and God is with us. We then ask, as the apostles did, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replies that if we had a tiny bit of faith, we could make miracles happen. Why are we expecting God to be our cosmic butler? God calls us to be the hands and feet of Jesus for the world – not to sit back and moan, but to get up and do God's work!



picture from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jimmy_Carter,_Las_Vegas_Convention_Center,_1992.jpg;
credit: Dan Perry

That means showing love and grace, even to our

enemies. Nobel Peace prize winner Jimmy Carter said in a speech, “We will not learn to live together in peace by killing each other's children.”¹ How many mass shootings will it take for us to get that message to sink in?

We might say, “But what can I do? I’m only human!” So are those who orchestrated events bringing us to this point in history. “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.” No one ever said transforming the world would be easy, only that in faith we could do it.

Look at what Paul wrote to Timothy. Paul suffered, yet he made use of God’s gift to us of “a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” As Paul instructed Timothy, we are also to “join with [Paul] in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.” We should “not be ashamed” but “hold to the standard of sound teaching ... in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus ... with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.”

Note the “us” part there. No one is expected to accomplish God’s work alone. I am reminded of this story by Rob Avis:²

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/watch?v=786126764025645>

² https://www.linkedin.com/posts/rob-avis-09b5a2281_most-people-think-sequoias-survive-because-activity-7366821964960759811-yf1G



"The tallest tree in the world has roots that only go 6-12 feet deep. That should be impossible. A 300-foot tree with shallow roots makes no sense from an engineering perspective. But... Sequoias don't survive alone.

picture & quote from
<https://www.linkedin.com/posts/rob-avis-09b5a2281-most-people-think-sequoias-survive-because-activity-7366821964960759811-yf1G>; posted by Rob Avis with Photo cred: @AMAZLNGNATURE on X

"Most people think sequoias survive because they're massive. But that's not even close to the real reason. If you've ever had the privilege standing beside one of these giants, you'll find it hard NOT to think of resilience.

These trees can live through droughts, fires, storms, and climate shifts that would kill almost anything else. But as an engineer this is what I'm fixated on: The tallest tree in the world has roots that only go 6-12 feet deep.

That should be impossible. A 300-foot tree with shallow roots makes no sense from an engineering perspective. But... Sequoias don't survive alone.

Their root systems spread 50-80 feet wide and interweave with every other sequoia around them. They share nutrients, water, and structural support. When storms come in, they support each other.

The forest is the system: Not the individual trees. I couldn't stop thinking about this.

Most people try to build resilience by making

themselves bigger, stronger, more independent. They stockpile resources, they build higher walls, they go it alone. But the most resilient systems in nature are interconnected.

Maybe the question isn't "how do I become more self-sufficient?" but "how do I become more meaningfully connected to the right systems?"



picture from

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As Christians, we know that connection can only be found in God's love, as lived by Jesus and with us now as the Holy Spirit. We join together today in communion with Christians across the world, to celebrate God's love and to "guard the good treasure entrusted to" us.