

CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 5, 2025

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4; Psalm 37:1-9; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Saint Luke 17:5-10

In nomine Jesu!

Our ancient texts today couldn't possibly reflect our current times better.

Habakkuk's 2700-year-old words

"O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?

Or cry to you "Violence!"
and you will not save?

³ Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?

Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise"

could easily be ripped from today's headlines.

The apostles' plea, "Increase our faith" might just as easily been ripped from our own lips and our own hearts.

When you live in a time of unremitting tension and rising fear as Habakkuk's first hearers did, and we do; when you live in a time when you feel constantly pensive, powerless, and paralyzed as Jesus' first disciples did, and we do; when you fret about your offsprings' future as grandmother Lois and mother Eunice and the writer of Second Timothy did, and we do; it is only natural that our fears and frustrations, uncertainties and indignations be aimed at and addressed to God.

God responds. To frustrated, fretting, fearful, pensive, paralyzed, God responds from the depths of God's love with the same antidote, the same fear-busting energy, the same gift, the gift of faith, that is of trust in God, as "the active practice of fidelity." Habakkuk, the writer of Second Timothy, and Jesus describe that gift as what

David Roschke's cousin and my New York predecessor Ron Roschke describes as a spectrum: faith that acts, faith that **is**, and faith that **has content**. Faith regularly planted and nourished in us; the faith handed down to us by our forebears which we in turn hand on to our children and grandchildren. Faith that is always and consistently the gift of the Holy Spirit flowing into us freely from the Promises – the Word – of God.

Habakkuk describes this faith in active terms as trust which grasps, clings, and holds on to God. This faith is the active practice of fidelity. As Habakkuk's hearers navigates through imminent and ever-present danger, God instructs Habakkuk then, as God instructs us preachers today, to make "the vision," that is, God's Promise of abundant life so clearly plain "that a runner may read it," because the Promise, made by God over and over again, and kept by God over and over again is recorded in the Scriptures and underscores the reliability of God. This is faith – trust in God – which shapes and animates the way we live, or as Habakkuk, and later Paul, and even later Luther put it is what the righteous live by.

The writer of Second Timothy describes faith that has content and is passed down, what we call the faith. The apostle celebrates the way the faith was handed on to Timothy by his maternal elders. We ought to celebrate that "handing down" here too, since for eighty years here, our forebears and now we of Christ the King Church have taken the faith, and what this writer identifies as our "holy calling" to hand on the faith with upmost seriousness: that's why Deacon Ben Remmert is here. That's what our Godly Play leaders and Confirmation instructors, and youth group enablers are laser focused on. The faith which our children and youth so amazingly exhibit and so easily share. The faith that, according to this writer is "the good deposit entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us." The faith that is practiced and acted out, exhibited for all to see by the dedication of our choir; the striving for excellence of all our worshiper enablers; the diligent focus on Christ's call to public mission exhibited by our congregation leaders; and your insistence that all of this be used, defended, and preserved in our life of faith together.

When we like the first apostles beg God to “increase our faith,” we are asking God for an extremely specific thing: a faith that we can count on and use especially amid challenging times like these. In today’s Gospel, the apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith because Jesus had, just a few verses earlier, instructed them to do some things which like them we are loath to do. In the beginning of this chapter, Jesus reminds us as he reminded them that “occasions for sin are bound to come” in divisive times like these. With that as the case, Jesus urges disciples to do everything possible to avoid causing “one of these little ones” (that is, one of our fellow disciples” to sin.” And, as if this is not hard enough, Jesus instructs disciples, then and now, to “rebuke the offender,” that is, name the outrage and the outrager. And finally, Jesus reminds them and us to do the most demanding thing of all: “if the same person sins against you seven times a day and turns back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive.”

It is this, avoiding offending others and yet rebuking wrongdoing and continuously forgiving repeat offenders and repenters, that causes the disciples then, and given our present contentious era, impels us to beg God to “increase our faith!”

You may think Jesus ignores that request in the words that follow, so I must remind us that there’s more to this Gospel than our text today – 7 more chapters followed by 28 more by Luke which we call the *Acts of the Apostles*. To increase our faith, Jesus dies, rises, and because Jesus dies and rises, pours out the Holy Spirit on us so that disciples then and disciples now might have the faith that doesn’t merely uproots mulberry trees, but turns the world upside down so that, as the hymn we are about to sing proclaims “a world restored” with “a faithful, caring church” proclaims, “Alleluia!”

Amandus J. Derr
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