

Luke 17: 5 -6 Faith as a mustard seed (芥菜种) .

Dear Congregation beloved of our Lord Jesus Christ: When we talk about a subject like faith, it is important to remember that faith is not some vague or nebulous (云雾状的, 模糊的) idea floating around somewhere but, our faith is always in something or someone.

Faith is a trust or confidence that you have in a person or persons. For example, you have to have some faith in the people who make your car, because, if you thought that the wheels of your car might come off (掉下来, 脱落) on the highway at a 100 km an hour, you would not get in a car. Nor would you get into an airplane if you did not trust the company that made the aircraft and had faith in the pilot who is going to take you up to altitude of 37,000 feet.

So even in ordinary everyday things, we live by faith. We have to because otherwise you couldn't live. If you distrusted every person and everything you be totally paranoid (偏执狂的, 过分猜疑的), living in anguish (苦恼), fear and distrust.

But the faith and trust that is most important for us to have is our faith in Christ, and in his word. Why is that? Because there is no one else who can give us eternal life. The wages of sin is death, and we are all sinners and we are all going to die.

But Jesus Christ has come into the world to die in the place of sinners like ourselves. The only way to escape Gods just judgment (审判) on us is to confess our sins and seek his forgiveness. That is where our faith begins.

So under the theme "Faith as a mustard seed", consider ;1. Faith in Christ. 2. The works of faith.

As I mentioned, our faith and trust must be in the person of Jesus Christ. Do we trust him to save us? Do we trust him that he is able to fulfill all his promises? Do we know for certain how trustworthy Christ is?

Well the Bible, the Word of God, from Genesis (创世纪) to Revelation (启示录) tells us how faithful Jesus is, and how powerful he is to complete what he promises. John 1:2 tells us "that all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made". We read in Colossians 1:20." That, God through Christ reconciled to himself all things on heaven or on earth making peace by the blood of his cross". (既然藉着他在十字架上所流的血, 成就了和平, 便藉着他叫万有, 无论是地上的、天上的, 都与自己和好了。)

We heard the good news from 2Corinthians 8:9 : "That even though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that thru his poverty you might become rich".

So, there no one like Christ as both Creator and Savior. Nor is there anyone else who has proven such love for us by dying on the cross to save us from our sins.

There is overwhelming historical proof that we can completely trust Jesus Christ in everything on the basis of what he has already done for us. All that he has ever promised in his word he has accomplished.

This is why our faith is based on the most solid foundation, the very words of God. Our faith in Christ means that we have overwhelming confidence and certainty that he is able and willing to save us from our sin and to bring us to heaven and to provide for us for all of eternity as he has promised in his word. Is Christ able to deliver as he promised?

That's the question many ask, and the answer of faith is, yes, praise God he is able, this we know and believe. He has proven it throughout history over and over again.

So we believe Luke 17:6 and whatthe Lord Jesus Christ will enable us to do. With faith like a mustard seed, we can say to a mulberry tree (桑树), be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea, and it will obey us."

How is that possible? How should we understand this? Our faith in Christ is the means, the instrument by which Christ does seemingly impossible things in the lives of those who trust in him.

So if we can have such faith in Christ to save us from the wrath of God, and completely entrust ourselves to him for all of eternity, then surely, we can trust him to enable us to do the works he has ordained for us to do, while we were still on earth. What work has the Lord ordained for us?

2.Consider the works of faith.

We are called his witnesses, his followers, his disciples, Matthew 28 :19 tell us to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age”. And Luke 24:47 says that repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations.”

So to help his disciples and us to understand how our faith is to bear fruit for him, Jesus uses the example of a mustard seed. The Lord uses one of the smallest and the most insignificant seeds as an example of faith.

I don't know if you've ever looked at a mustard seed, but it is a tiny little seed just like a grain of sand, fine sand so small. But it's effectiveness, or its fruit is by no means limited to its size. God made it so small and so insignificant, but it can accomplish great things.

How? Well, the sower plants this little seed in good soil in order to become fruitful. Does this seed get any bigger when it's in the ground?

No, the seed stays the same insignificant little self.

But it starts to sprout and send out its roots, and up comes this little stem above the ground. But that's not the end, that's only a beginning. In just a short time there is all kinds of activity coming out of that little seed, and as it grows more and more it becomes into an enormous plant.

But, what would happen if you do not plant this seed in soil? Will there be a plant and fruit? Obviously not.

So, what is the Lord teaching us through this example? He's telling us that our faith as small as a mustard seed can bear fruit but it must be put in good soil. What kind of soil? Jesus explains this in John 15:4 when he says, "abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me". He then further explained in verse 7 "if you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you". By this is my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples".

So we can only be fruitful if his word abides or remain in us. In other words, we must trust and obey his word. As the hymn writer put it. Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

The seed of faith must be planted in the word of God in order to bear fruit. And when we are doing what Jesus tells us to do, then our faith in him will be able to do unbelievable things.

So many times in Scripture Jesus draws attention to the fact that our faith in him is shown by our love for him, and our love for him is shown in our obedience to him. In Luke 8:21 Jesus says "my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it".

In John 14:21 Jesus says "whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him". The Lord will prove how much he loves us if we obey him.

Our faith is never separated from our works in the Bible. Ephesians 2: 8 to 10 right away ties the two together. It says "by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves is a gift of God". But then in the very next verse we are told why we are given the gift of faith. "For we are his workmanship created in Jesus Christ unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them"

So, we must not think that in history when God's saints were called upon to perform great acts by faith that at that moment in time all of a sudden God gave them the booster shot full of faith vitamins, or faith steroids, no. Being fruitful to the Lord comes very naturally when you live a life of obedience in serving the Lord. Why is that?

It is because just as that small mustard seed has to be put into the soil for its life and sustenance in order for it to grow, so our faith has to be put into the soil of the word of God.

If the mustard seed is not put into the soil, there will be no plant and no fruit. So it is with our faith in Jesus Christ. The power to do the impossible comes from the power of the word of God that the Holy Spirit works in us.

By yielding ourselves to the Holy Spirit by believing and trusting in the word of God, that word becomes part of us, it becomes part of who we are.

It forms our way of thinking and living, and that is what then enables us to do the will of God. So, thru the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we are able to do impossible things. In vs.6 ; "you can say to this mulberry tree, "Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea, and it would obey you." That is impossible right?

Yes, for us it is impossible but no more than for example what Moses did, when he put his faith in the Lord and obeyed him. When Moses was a young boy he made a conscious choice. He did this when he was growing up in Pharaoh's house. **If** he had renounced his God and his people, he could have become a great ruler in Egypt.

He could have sat on pharaoh's throne . But he left all that behind by believing and obeying the word of the Lord.

As a result, God used him as a mighty instrument in His hand to perform the 10 miraculous plaques, and leading God's people out of Egypt. By obeying and trusting the Lord he was able to bring about the destruction of the powerful Egyptian emperor.

Pharaoh and his whole army drowned in the red sea while a million of God's chosen people were set free from slavery. That is far more miraculous than pulling up a mulberry tree and transplanting it in the sea.

How did Moses do this? Because we read in Hebrews 11:25" By faith he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season".

Like Abraham, so also by faith Moses looked beyond the earthly things.

He set his mind on heavenly things, already as a young man. He purposed in his heart to serve the Lord, and he was able to accomplish great things.

The same is true for Joseph, David and Daniel and other men of faith. Young people take notice that these were faithful young men 16-17 years old.

But from their youth , by faith, they were seeking the Lord diligently. By their faith they sought in all things to obey God. In faith they submitted themselves to do God's will.

So here you see the beautiful example of the mustard seed. Out of this little bitty seed of faith, God enabled them to do impossible things.

Like David by faith in God slaying Goliath. Or by faith Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream and as a result causing the Emperor to say" truly your God is the God of gods and the Lord of Kings". Or Joseph ruling over Egypt when he was 30 yrs old.

Moses did not decide on his own to lead God's people out of Egypt. David had no idea that he would be called away from the sheep when Samuel had come to his father's house to anoint him. And certainly David could not have planned all the great things that God had chosen for him to do.

The good works that God had ordained for him to do, he learned as he obediently walked with the Lord by faith day by day.. Step by step the Lord led him and encouraged him as he continued faithfully to do the work that God gave him.

Listen children to the impossible you can do by your faith. In 2 Kings 5 we read the story of a very young girl who witnessed to the Syrian general. She was a slave girl taken captive from Israel. Maybe eight or ten years old.

Naman was the man who used to plan these attacks. So he was her enemy, but she was taken into his home as a slave girl. And yet the life of this tough Syrian general who conquered many countries, his life was changed because this young servant girl had such faith in the word of God brought by the prophet Elijah.

Her testimony was so convincing that the word of God was powerful enough to heal him from his leprosy, he believed her, and in the end was healed and became a believer himself.

So dear brothers and sisters , the point the Lord is making is that by your faith in Christ you can accomplish unbelievable things. Why? Because these are the works that Jesus Christ, the head of the church, has ordained for his faithful church to do.

If you are doing what the Lord has told you by his Spirit in his word, you will see unbelievable results in your life. What kind of things? Well, what do you think is the greatest work that you can do with your life? What is the most important achievement you can accomplish in your life.?

Is it not to be used of the Lord so that those who are dead in trespasses and sins, those who are blinded and crippled and dead in sin, can come alive by faith in Christ? Is it not a marvelous thing that by your faith in Christ others may come to see the beauty of Christ, and the glory of Christ, the power of Christ? And to know and to feel the love of Christ.?

Isn't the greatest gift that you can give to anyone else that they too may come to know the tender mercy of Christ and the forgiveness of their many sins?

The impossible thing that you can do by your faith in Christ is that by telling others to put their faith in Christ they too can receive eternal life. An eternal life of living in utter happiness and joy in the presence of God the father, son, and Holy Spirit forever and ever.

If your faith in Christ would bear that kind of fruit, isn't that as impossible as saying to a mulberry tree get up and be cast into the sea?

It is a far greater work than the greatest other earthly work that you can accomplish with your life. Think how fruitful your life would be if by your faith in Christ others would come to faith in Christ.?

That by your love and by your obedience and your adoration and worship of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, your children, and family members, and friends, and fellow workers would also bow down before him?. That they would also repent, and praise him and adore him for the forgiveness of their sins and his great love for them? .

This is the work that the Lord has given to his bride the Church Christ, to you dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

I want to encourage you, to use your faith in Christ that God has given to you to bring others to Christ.

To teach those around you, in your walk of life and the words that come from your mouth and the things that you do every day, how much you love Christ and how faithful you want to be to him because he is worthy of all praise and all adoration as your Savior and Lord

Let us worship him, so that others may worship him with us, with that little tiny faith as small as a mustard seed he has given us for his glory.

But in order to do that, you need to keep your eyes fixed upon Jesus the author and the finisher of your faith. You obey his voice as he speaks to you from his word and by his Spirit.

Living by faith in Christ every day, in all circumstances of life teaches us so much about Jesus Christ. When he is there with you, when you have a serious accident, and you end up in the hospital, or when you're standing around the grave, when you're sitting in a wheelchair, or you lose your job,. In all circumstances of life from day to day he is there to help you and to encourage you to continue to trust in him.

Look at it this way brothers and sisters, Christ has bought you with his own precious blood, so you are his and he has given you the Holy Spirit who lives in him and in you, to encourage you, to counsel you, to help you. Is that a great comfort to you? And a great encouragement to you?

Remember that Christ is very able to complete the good works he has chosen for you to do. How? By The Holy Spirit who is your helper to bear fruit. You can trust him no matter what happens to you as you are on the way to the celestial city.

So, dear brothers and sisters, in summary: God has raised you up in this generation to complete his works today. These are works done by those who have a child like faith, like a mustard seed. Men, woman, yps children who in all sorts of difficult times and circumstances continue to be faithful to trust and obey Christ and what he has promised in his word.

In spite of the many temptations they remain obedient. In spite of the many discouragements and opposition, they continue in the work that the Lord has given them to do. And their faith will never fail as I Peter 1:5-6 says so beautifully "we are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time". What a glorious day it will be, when our faith will be sight and we see Jesus. Amen.