



Series: Seeds

Sermon: No Need to Wait

Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” 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. “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’? 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’? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 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!’”

Monday: Read Hebrews 11:1

Faith is sometimes better understood as a verb than as a noun, as a process than as a possession. It’s on-again-off-again rather than a once-and-for-all. Faith is not being sure of where you are going but going anyway. A journey without maps. Paul Tillich said that doubt isn’t the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith. As hard as we might try, we can’t prove the existence of God, but we are called to practice faith. To go, to share, to speak, to love – in God’s name. Perhaps it is precisely our acts of faith that provide evidence of God in this world. What is your “By faith...” statement? How might you express your faith as a verb? How is God calling you to a deeper response in faith?

Prayer: Faithful God, help me to see opportunities to practice faith. Amen.

Tuesday: Read 1 Samuel 17:4-11, 19-23, 32-49

In his book on David, *Leap over a Wall*, Eugene Peterson states that the image in the David & Goliath story that most arrests his attention is the one of young David kneeling down by the brook to gather up his five smooth stones. Peterson thinks that the whole David saga is finally about becoming human, about awakening to the reality of a God-infused world. No one present that day could have guessed that the young man picking stones out of the brook was doing the most significant work of the day. Being a believer means having faith that says that however God works it out, at the end of the day, God's purposes will not be thwarted. God will accomplish what God sets out to do. What kind of a difference would it make in the life of the church if more of us practice this kind of firm faith in God? How might we approach our work for God's kingdom differently? What would "awakening to the reality of a God-infused world" look like in our church? In our lives?

Prayer: God, help us to act boldly on our faith. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Esther 3:2-6; 4:11-17

Esther, like the Hebrew people in exile, is an orphan as the book opens. She is taken in by her uncle Mordecai, an advisor at the royal court and, later, a hero who saves the king from an assassination plot. Esther eventually finds herself as part of the king's harem, hiding her Jewish identity in order to maneuver into the king's favor. She finds herself Queen as she learns Haman has convinced the king to decree that all Jews be killed. But possibly the most surprising aspect of Esther's narrative is that God is not mentioned nor is anyone depicted as praying to God, praising God, or so much as tipping their hat toward the Almighty. Esther is hardly the only narrative in the Bible in which the "hidden hand" of God is implied by people of faith, yet because it is perhaps the most extended such narrative, it offers hope for all of us whose days are not typically punctuated by God speaking to us from a burning bush or a host of angels. Faith tells us that God is with us but reality shows us that this is not always easy to see or to name in concrete ways. Esther bears witness to the ongoing work of God and offers encouragement to us who now and then struggle to figure out what God is up to in this world or in our lives. How do you see God at work in your own life? When have you seen the "hidden hand" of God? In what ways do you relate to Esther?

Prayer: Use us, O God, to accomplish your plan and purpose in this world. Amen.

Thursday: Read Mark 5:25-34

Traditionally Jewish men included tassels called tzitzit on the corners of their outer garment. These tassels, knotted in a way as to remind the wearer of God's covenant with Israel, were often used in prayer throughout the day with the tassels woven between the fingers. It is widely believed that this is the part of Jesus' garment the hemorrhaging woman touched. The edges of your outer garment were woven in a way that conveyed your position and authority in society. The edge of your garment and the tassels woven there said something important about who you were. The woman believed that

if she could only touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would experience the power of His person and authority. Her act was not a matter of superstition, but instead one of faith. She was healed, but more importantly she was seen and named; she was restored into community; she was made whole, in body, but more importantly, in spirit. Faith tells us Jesus is willing and able to help, even if for now in this still-messy world all things cannot turn out in every instance as we fervently may wish they would. Do you believe Jesus has the power and authority to heal? In what ways do you need to seek healing? How do we offer healing community for those who are sick and suffering? When have you been Jesus' healing presence for someone?

Prayer: Jesus, give us the faith to heal in your name. Amen.

Friday: Read Luke 7:1-10

What a curious little story this is. A powerful Roman, a sick servant, and Jesus—who have a very significant "encounter" with one another—worthy of inclusion in the Gospel—and yet they never lay eyes on each other, never shake hands, never speak in person. What strikes me most about this story is that there is something about the central dynamic that reminds us of how we now live by faith in Jesus who does his work in our lives not in person but through others, through the Spirit. We don't get to see Jesus with our waking eyes the way, for a few brief years, people in the Mediterranean Basin did. But perhaps the story of the centurion is a reminder that Jesus can and will work anyway. Even in those moments we feel unworthy or insignificant, even when we are the outsider or the uninvited one, it can happen because it did happen. Who do you most relate to in this story? Why? What act of faith can you take today to acknowledge that Jesus is present in our world?

Prayer: Help us to believe, even though we have not seen. Amen.

Saturday: Read Hebrews 11:7

The story of Noah and the ark is a familiar one filled with images of boats, animals, and rainbow filled skies. It is the story of Noah who devoted 120 years to building an ark in preparation for something he had no evidence was going to happen. It's a harsh story, filled with destruction and death, and yet, somehow, Noah's faithfulness bears witness to the promise of God's covenant with all living things. How does our faith bear witness to God's promise of life? Are there circumstances where we might be called to offer this kind of hope in the world? How might we respond faithfully?

Prayer: God of grace, give us courage to act boldly, and faith to trust your promises. Amen.