

In the summer of 1987 as I was graduating high school McDonalds did something that had never been done before in fast food.

Do you know what it was?

They introduced for the first time- the Super size as a way to upsize their fries and drinks.

Nowadays most of the fast-food places we go ask you one question. Do you want to upsize that?

Our Scripture lesson from Luke this morning comes from the long travel narrative that stretches from chapter 9 through chapter 19. My guess is that by the time we reach chapter 17 and the disciples were approaching the end of their journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, they were weary and dead tired.

Their latest challenge from Jesus and ours was to forgive another person who has wronged them in this gospel even seven times a day. The thought of that had to wear them out. Who wouldn't be? They have been challenged physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They were still walking into the unknown of Jerusalem, They didn't know how they could possibly continue.

And then in verse 5 they seemingly can't take it anymore and **The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"**

Their faith was running low.
Their energy was depleted.
They were in the midst of an incredible spiritual fatigue.
They needed a faith transplant.
Have you ever been there?

They turn to Jesus and ask Jesus to supersize their faith

so they can do what Jesus was asking them to do.
Before this incident, there have been five times that faith has been mentioned in the gospel of Luke.

In chapter 5, after some men had let a friend down through a roof in order to get him to the place where Jesus was, **“When he saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you.’”**

Chapter 7 tells the story of a Roman centurion who came to Jesus asking him to heal his slave. He said that he was not worthy to have Jesus enter his house, but he knew that Jesus could heal from a distance. Jesus said in reply, **“...not even in Israel have I found such faith”** (7:9).

Also in chapter 7, when a sinful woman washed his feet and dried them with her hair, he said, **“Your faith has saved you; go in peace”** (7:50).

Then in Chapter 8 Jesus was out on the Sea of Galilee with his disciples. He was sleeping in the back of the boat when a fierce storm arose out of nowhere. The disciples woke him up, telling him that they were going to sink and drown. As he spoke a calming word to the water and the wind, he said to the disciples, **“Where is your faith?”** (8:25).

Toward the end of that chapter, a woman who had been hemorrhaging for many years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his robe. He said to her, **“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace”** (8:48).

It is clear in these instances that faith requires trusting in Jesus enough to know that he is able to powerfully act to address our problems or crises. So they went to Jesus and said, “Give us more faith.” **6 He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.”**

Jesus told them that they didn’t need “more” faith. They simply had to be able to tap into the faith that they already had. They need to embrace their already present faith even though it may have been just a small amount like a mustard seed.

In the ancient word a mustard seed was proverbial
for something really really small.

The mustard seed is the smallest of all the seeds.

Yet, when it is planted and nurtured by
the soil and the rain and the sunlight,
it slowly grows and matures and blossoms.

It starts small, but grows steadily into a large tree.

It may look small to you now but the impact will be big.

The mulberry tree was one of the largest trees in the Middle East.

Huge (and messy) — and their roots and shoots creep all over the place.

It's really hard to get rid of a mulberry.

Interestingly enough like the mustard tree.

So, the apostles ask for more faith.

But Jesus' response sounds a bit like
he didn't quite hear the question right.

I'm guessing that the disciples were thinking
did you hear what we said? Are you listening?

How exactly does Jesus respond to their request? –
which seems reasonable enough.

Does he say, “I want you to dig deep within yourself
so you can discover the inner strength of faith
that lays hidden within your being”? Or Use the force.

Or does Jesus give them some kind of secret formula for faith?

Follow these three steps and you'll get more faith.

No – instead he gives them a small object-big impact lesson.

The Message paraphrase of verse 6 is outstanding.

“But the Master said, ‘You don't need more faith.

There is no “more” or “less” in faith.

If you have a bare kernel of faith,
say the size of a poppy seed,
you could say to this sycamore tree,
“Go jump in the lake,” and it would do it.”

Of course, Jesus is speaking in metaphors again.

There is probably no good reason to

command a tree to uproot and jump into the sea.
But that's not really the point.
He gets them laughing.
As he is talking, the apostles are all picturing
how silly it would be for a huge tree to pull itself
from the ground and to start running toward the sea
The point isn't that we should go about
practicing faith by creating a silly show or spectacles —
by telling trees to uproot —
rather that we should expect that even
small faith can have a big impact. Amen?

You see, the disciples were asking Jesus to fill their gas tanks with more faith.

But he was telling them how to get more
miles per gallon on the fuel he had already given to them.
Half a gallon will be enough if you drive the way I'm telling you.

We tend to think that we need a lot of spirituality and maturity –
- or we get reluctant to try anything significant.
And then if our tanks aren't full we're tempted
to think that the whole God thing isn't working.
We have doubts and struggles — things get messy along the way. We stall out.
This is an indirect way of blaming God
for not giving us enough faith – or spiritual fuel.
But look again at how Jesus encourages
his disciples to get with his program.
They don't need to wait around for some
kind of epiphany or super spiritual experience.
They don't need a secret Jesus decoder ring.
They don't need to supersize their faith!
The way that Jesus phrases his response
implies that the disciples already had the faith they needed.
They just weren't using it.

The disciples didn't need more faith – they needed more faithfulness.

We tend to think in big and grandiose terms.
We are inclined to think that big works best
and that if you're not doing something

really big and flashy it isn't real faith.

If we're doing something grand we feel important.

But if we are acting in faith in small ways –

on a mustard seed level – then there isn't much audience applause.

It might be digging a hole or trimming a tree on a workday

Bringing items for Graceworks or snacks for schools

Planting flowers or taking a meal to someone

Sending a card or serving somewhere on Sunday morning

Now, Jesus certainly is not suggesting

that we should avoid big acts of faith.

Only that when we define faith in such grand terms

then we feel like we can never measure up –

then we'll never be ready to have enough

faith to do what God wants done.

We want to do big impression things, so we want big faith.

I suspect that was what the apostles were thinking

when they asked Jesus to help them increase their faith.

They wanted to know which conference and training program they should attend.

which rally would change their spiritual batteries.

But instead of sending them on a life changing epic quest or

enrolling them in a leadership development program —

he simply suggests that they exercise

the little faith they already have —

that they do something with it –

because even a little has a big impact.

You'll be able to tell the trees to go jump in the lake.

Now, having said all of this,

we also need to recognize that there is more implied in Jesus' answer.

Big isn't the enemy. Small isn't better.

The real issue centers around two words;

The first is **Proportion or perhaps Disproportion** –

because we're trusting in a big God we can expect

big things in disproportion to the amount of faith we exercise.

That is, we're always going to end up

with a result that is bigger than, and in excess of,

what we have put into it.

You see, in some ways this isn't about the disciples at all.

It's about God – the object of our faith.

When we hesitate it's not really that we are sensing

our own inadequacy but instead that they were not sensing God's adequacy.

I am very guilty of this...

When Hannah was little there was a Veggie Tales

song we listened to: "My God is so big —

so strong and so mighty there's nothing my God cannot do."

If we'd started reading at the beginning of Luke

we would have already heard already heard this message

Luke – 1:37 "For nothing is impossible with God."

This is about the nature and power of God —

which God graciously allows us to tap into by faith.

If you take even a small mustard seed size step forward,

trusting in God, God can use it in great ways.

To you, it looks like nothing — but to a powerful God

even a mustard seed is a great asset.

Small object — big impact. But you have to take the first step.

Second, this discussion is really about the nature of faith —

rather what it looks like — practically speaking.

That is, the second word is: **Faithfulness**

Check out the story starting at vs. **7 "Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? 8 Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? 9 Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? 10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "**

In other words, exercising faith — whether big or small isn't

a matter of putting on a show or making bold statements —

rather it is the humble, invisible, routine,

day-in-and day out business of serving.

The disciples were asking for faith — -

Jesus was saying if you act faithfully you've already got it.
It's not so much about having big ideas for God –
lots of faith as it is about living faithfully with what you've got. Say that again.

Now, of course this sounds better in a sermon than in real life.
Because in real life serving day in and day out can be extremely wearing.
There is no glamour or romance in humble service.
We are about to begin ask you to be
servant leaders for NFUMC in 2026.
Faithfulness is shown in our willingness to serve
To start with our yes and see how God can use us.

Small faith = big impact

Big faith = huge impact

God is going to bless it -- probably in ways we can't imagine.
But like in life in general -- the blessing is related to faithfulness –
faithfulness in the small things –
the small routine or even mundane things done
in humbleness without whining or bickering.
There is a certain paradox here.

As we act faithfully we grow

in our faith and capacity to trust God.

Bill Hybels said How do you pray a prayer so filled
with faith that it can move a mountain?
By shifting your focus from the size of your mountain
to the sufficiency of the Mountain Mover
and then stepping forward in obedience.

So, where are you in this story?

Are you standing over with the disciples begging for more faith?
Or are you on the other side –
so busy being faithful with what you've got
that you not so interested in asking for more?
Because you don't need it!
May we all be disciples who say I have
a mustard seed and I'm not afraid to use it 🙏