

27th Week of Ordinary Time 2025

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4; Ps 94; Tim 1:6-8. 13-14; Luke 17: 5-9

I was struggling this week with the links within the Gospel. One moment Jesus is talking about having the faith to say to a mulberry tree, *“Be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you.”* and the next moment he is saying *‘Will any one of you who has a servant ploughing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, “Come at once and recline at table”?’*

These two separate images, why are they presented like this together? Are they just two separate teachings which Luke just put together because he had no other place, a bit of sloppy editing? Maybe there is no specific unity between them. But then, on Thursday, waiting at one of the many red traffic lights on the way into Loughborough, I saw it.

But first a summary of what is happening in the Gospel. First, the metaphor of the mulberry tree. A Metaphor is a symbolic image to convey a powerful meaning beyond what they portray. This is my understanding. The Mulberry trees in the Middle East grow 6 to 12 meters high. They have an extensive root system, pushing deep into the soil in their search for water and stability. You are the Mulberry tree. You have deep roots that penetrate into the world around you. Your senses, your appetites, your family, your occupations, your community, your politics, everything firmly establishes your existence firmly here, in the world. The sea is alien to the Mulberry tree: there is no soil, there is no fresh water, there is no stability. The call of God to us feels like the Mulberry tree being called to be planted in the sea: we cannot be sustained there, we cannot leave the world behind. We can if we have faith - trust - in God. Jesus has

no interest in planting a real Mulberry Tree in the sea. He has a real desire to uproot you from your rootedness in the world and orientating you to His Father. Which might prove more difficult.

The second image, although longer, seems simpler to explain. *‘Will any one of you who has a servant ploughing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, “Come at once and recline at table”?’* No, do your duty, serve God, not from a sense of reward, or entitlement, but simply because He is God. It is absurd to think otherwise. No saint ‘deserves’ heaven, they have simply done what has been asked of them.

This then forged the link between the two images Jesus is using: A saint is someone – a Mulberry tree if you like - who has allowed themselves to be uprooted from the attractions of the world around them and be planted in God’s Love. They no longer serve the world. They have responded to that particular call of faith, with a particular gaze: a gaze of love catching the eye of love.

This is the Disciple Matthew, who left his world of comfort and certainty collecting taxes for the Roman Emperor, to follow Jesus into the unknown. This is the Venerable Mary Potter, who left off marriage, her mother, her comfortable life, and faced stubborn Bishops and doubting souls to follow Jesus and serve the dying and detested in Hyson Green. In fact these are the very words of Jesus which we heard on Wednesday’s Gospel:

As Jesus and his disciples were going along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ To another he said, ‘Follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’¹

¹ Luke 9:57-62

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This is not Jesus just preaching using a metaphor of the Mulberry Tree but offering us the opportunity, through faith and service, to live it.

How do we embark on this life of faith? Now it happens that for many months I have been thinking about how can we learn more about how we serve Jesus. Do we know? Pray? Be Kind? Give alms? Go to Church? Sure, but is there more? Yes, there is much more. There is understanding.

So, I am giving to each of you a copy of '*A Catechism of Christian Doctrine.*' It is a little tomb of Christian teaching

Examples:

Article 117: What was the sin committed by Adam? The sin committed by Adam was the sin of disobedience when he ate the forbidden fruit.

Article 271: In order to receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily what is required?

In order to receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily it is required that we be in a state of grace and keep the prescribed fast: water does not break this fast.

Article 277: What is the Holy Mass? The Holy Mass is the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, really present on the altar under the appearances of bread and wine, and offered to God for the living and the dead.

Article 339: Does Jesus Christ also command us to love one another? Jesus Christ also commands us to love one another – that is, all person without exception – for his sake.

We can look in between its cover and discover how we can become Mulberry trees uprooted by the command of faith and replanted in obedience to Jesus.

And the light turned green.