

The title for today's message is: **Is Your Faith running on empty?**

Jesus said: ***“If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.***

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

“You just gotta have faith.” That’s a popular sentiment in our society today. By and large, people believe that faith is an important virtue worth having.

Yet, the problem is, were so caught up in determining what this thing called faith is all about, and whether or not we have it, or have enough of it.

Remember, Jesus’ own disciples struggled with this very same issue. They often heard Jesus talk about faith, and it was something they wanted.

But they weren’t quite sure what it was, or if they even had it. Sometimes, I think we all feel the same way from time to time.

We wonder if we are truly faithful believers, and deep-down we long for some tangible, outward proof, to assure us that we have enough faith.

So we often say “Lord, Increase my faith”! Now this will be our focus this morning, and making it clear that it is something we should ask for.

Now let’s consider these two points: One, why did the disciples make this request, and two, how did Jesus respond to them.

Beginning now with the first point, “Why did the disciples make this request”. I ask you, have you ever felt completely inadequate for a task?

Sometimes people ask things of us, that were not sure we can do. I remember the first time one of my friends tried to ride a two-wheel bicycle.

His father was certain that he could ride the bike, yet my friend wasn't sure about it. Ever though his dad would show him what to do, he was afraid.

He didn't think he could do it. And the more his father pushed him, the more impossible it became. He was just uncertain of his own abilities.

And here in our gospel lesson for today, we find Jesus' disciples experiencing the same kind of fear as my friend did. But why?

Well, Jesus had just given His disciples some heavy instructions. ***He said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!"***

Jesus went on to say: ***Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.***

Now, Jesus gives two directives here: first; don't be a stumbling block to someone else's faith, and second, forgive them.

Look we live in a society that would like nothing more than to undermine our faith walk with God.

As Christians, we wear our faith on our sleeves, that is in order that our friends and neighbors can see that were believers in God.

Yet, when those same people see us saying, or doing things that are contrary to the Christian life.

It confuses them and they wonder about our sincerity, or worse yet, they begin to question our Lord.

It may even lead them to do, or say the very same things, since they saw us doing or saying it, they simply assume its alright.

This is why Jesus said, ***Pay attention to yourselves!*** Doing so requires faith not only in one's self, but more importantly in God.

Jesus says when someone is a stumbling block to us, and are tempted by sin, we as followers of God are to forgive them. Easy enough, right

Truth is, its hard for most of us to forgive even though Jesus wants us to forgive, no matter how difficult it is.

But sadly, when we do forgive someone we also have to say to them. "I'll forgive you This Time". Now Jesus speaks to this attitude.

He says if someone sins against you once, or even seven times, and repents, you are to forgive them.

Here, Jesus is telling us that we are to be willing to forgive one another, no matter how often we sin against each other.

And what is the first thing we think when we find it too hard to forgive? We think, "If only I had more faith".

What were really saying is God you didn't give me enough faith in the first place. Its not our fault, it's God's. But Jesus responded by saying:

"If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

Here Jesus was saying that the disciples do have enough faith, even if its as small as a mustard seed.

The point is the disciples and you and I are just not using the faith we do have. So when we ask God for more faith we're asking for the wrong thing.

We, nor the disciples need more faith, we have all the faith needed. We just need to believe in our faith, which by the way, is a gift from God.

Look, if you spend too much time and energy looking at the size of your faith, the chances are you'll be disappointed in what you see.

Truth is, it's impossible to serve God as He expects us to. We are sinful and weak. And that's exactly what Jesus wants us to understand.

Now, when we look at our lives, as proof of God's favor, and when we think He owes us something.

We're tempted to fix our eyes on ourselves, thinking we've been good enough, or have done enough, to earn a reward from God.

My friends, this is not faith, we can't even be sure that we've done enough to please God, let alone expect a reward.

To be a faithful Christian is to admit, "that God doesn't owe you anything; that in fact, you deserve nothing but His wrath."

Look, when we realize that, His grace becomes precious. And it's in and through His grace that He tells us that He loves us.

Remember, God has proven His love for all of us. By sending His Son Jesus Christ into the world to save all people from their sin.

We say; Jesus saved me! Words that strengthen our faithfulness. We do have faith because God is faithful in keeping His promises.

When we have faith, and confidence to trust God's faithfulness, Heaven is yours and mine says the Lord. And we can dare to be faithful for Him.

The Lord urges us to use what we've been given, and God's grace is all-sufficient. So, there's no reason for excuses.

Rather, there are opportunities. That's right, God places us among each other, to serve as a source of encouragement and forgiveness.

Our faith may be as tiny as a mustard seed, but its strong, strong enough to move mountains, because God is its strength.

We hear "You gotta have faith", and its those who say this often that look to themselves as the foundation, or basis of their faith soon find out their wrong.

The foundation, or basis of our faith, whether great or small, is Christ Jesus Himself.

He insists, "You gotta have faith," and its important to know that He doesn't leave us to look for the source of that faith on our own.

Instead, Jesus completes that important sentence, proving once again His grace. He says, "You just gotta have faith, and I've given it to you!"

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.