



Diocese of Winchester

Preach **Luke** notes

Proper 22 Year C
7th October 2007

RELATED
Hab 1:1-4, 2:1-4
Psalm 37:1-9

CONTINUOUS
Lamentations 1:1-6
Psalm 137
2 Tim 1:1-14

Luke 17:5-10 (NIV) **Faith and Duty**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.

'If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him.' The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 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.

'Suppose one of you had a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, "Come along now and sit down to eat"? Would he not rather say, "Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink"? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? 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.' "

The context is important here in understanding the disciples' cry that Jesus will show them how to increase their faith. In the light of the gospel's demands they are feeling inadequate, hence the importance of looking back into Chapter 16. Clearly there are times when we as 21st Century disciples also feel inadequate.

The "superstar" and Red Bull images are used to show that Jesus' solutions are very different to the world's answers. The superstar image may also be useful in helping to tease out that the Kingdom grows as we all work together – we are not looking for superstars in the church – but faithfulness. You may find better illustrations for your situations.

Verses 1-4

I pick these up because they seem to set the scene for the disciples' cry in Verse 5

Verse 6

One of the encouragements I have taken from this is that Jesus tells the disciples that the answer lies within them. It is to do with their faith – no matter how small they think it is. Hence my references contrasting this with quick fix House and Garden programmes, where help is drafted in from outside.

God is asking them to work with what they have, not what they do not have. Encouraging for those in our churches who feel they have little or nothing to offer. It

is not about working up great faith, but about having faith in a great God.

I refer to John 5:19 in which Jesus says that he can only do what he sees the Father doing. Jesus did not have to “work things up” and neither do we. I refer towards the end of the sermon to the need to recognise what God is doing in our communities and churches. What opportunities are we being given?

Verses 7-10

Quite a tricky passage! Tom Wright sums it up as “Finally, the shocking lesson that all we do, even the hard work we do for God, never for a moment puts God in our debt”.

The truth is that our Christian duty to serve God in obedience and faithfulness never comes to an end.

This is, I think, the main link in the passage with Christian Stewardship. Harvest thankfulness ought to overflow in a desire to be more obedient and dutiful. Hence my references that we can be overwhelmed by the needs around us, but that with faith and obedience, which includes releasing the financial resources to enable the church to go about its kingdom business, great things can happen. Lives and community can be changed and the gospel produce fruit. (Also - don't forget the work and testimony of any mission links you have)

Finances are a way that we can all play our part even in a situation in which we may feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. Hopefully we will all be able to draw local examples of successful local projects which have tested faith, but which in the end testify to God's faithfulness.

My closing paragraphs again try to encourage us that we all have a part to play, and that God will honour us as we step out in faith for him.

Additional all age idea

Not very original but having lots of mustard seeds (you might want to point out it's a different kind of mustard from the one in Jesus' words) and planting them in compost in a small pot / sowing them on dampened tissue paper on a paper plate to take home and see what happens.

For prayers create a Prayer Tree with branches at the front of church. Everyone could have a paper mulberry leaf on which to write / draw their prayers and come forward to hang them on the mulberry tree.

