

## **Meditation for Worldwide Communion**

**Luke 17:5-10**

**Home Moravian Church, October 5, 2025**

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

What would that look like?

By that point in their walk with Jesus, the twelve might have expected a response that was immediate, dramatic, and *visible*. Think of what they have already seen, as Luke tells the story. When Peter’s mother-in-law was suffering from a fever, they simply “asked him about her,” and he “rebuked the fever,” and she got well and got out of bed then and there. When a leper came crying, “Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean,” Jesus chose, and “immediately the leprosy left him.” When a synagogue leader fell at Jesus’ feet and begged him to come heal his dying daughter, Jesus went to the house and raised the child. People asked for things, and things happened. Visible things. Ask and you shall receive, and furthermore you shall see what you are receiving, right in front of your face.

So when the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith,” what did they expect to see? What would it look like? Would they somehow grow larger? Would their faces shine like Jesus’ face did at the transfiguration? “Increase our faith!” At a word, Jesus could make it happen. But how would they know if it did? Would their increase in faith be something they could *see*?

You know, it’s good to know the disciples made this request: “Increase our faith.” These were the people closest to Jesus, the people who spoke with him and broke bread with him and walked with him and witnessed his acts of compassion first hand. You would think they would have faith in spades, but here they are, asking, “Increase our faith!” Good to know. Because

we're asking, too. All the time. "Increase our faith!" But what do we think will happen? What do we think it will look like?

Trying to picture increased faith, we might go looking, say, in self-help section of the bookstore. Here's a few actual titles to get us started: *Increase Your Faith: Practical Steps to Help You Believe for the Impossible*. *Increase My Faith: A Handbook for Those Wanting to Believe More Today Than They Did Yesterday*. *Faith for Increase: How to Exercise Your Faith*. *36 Ways to Increase Your Faith*. *52 Ways to Increase Your Faith*. *30 Days to Increased Faith: Increase Your Faith, Attract God's Attention, and Achieve Your [!] Dreams*.

And Jesus raises his eyebrows and says, "Mustard seed. Mulberry tree."

A few of us wander past the bookstore and into seminary, where words come thicker and faster. If the faith doesn't increase, the syllables certainly do. Then we trot out the doors of our various institutions and try out new words to capture the glory of a faith increased. "Consider," we say, "the hermeneutics of the soteriological message of this pericope, with its eschatological import."

And Jesus shakes his head—compassionately, we hope—and repeats: "Mustard seed. Mulberry tree." And he points, like he's trying to get our attention.

As we search for ways to increase our faith, Jesus seems to be pointing to something that already exists all around us. The faith that exists in the life of this earth, in things we can touch, things we can see. A mustard seed, tiny and round, faithful in its response to God's good command to grow. A mulberry tree, cool and shady, faithful in its response to God's good command to bear fruit. Can our faith be like that: existing within us, empowering us to follow God's good command for our own lives? Can it really be that palpable, that visible? Mustard seed. Mulberry tree.

If the apostles expected Jesus to perform some visible action, the modern Christian might respond with Hebrews 11:1: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things *not seen*.” Yet our faith is built on a story that is full of arresting visual images. In the gospel of John, when John’s disciples came to Jesus saying, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered, “Go and tell John what you have *seen* and heard.” Pay attention to what you see all around you. And if the striking miracles in front of your faces have not been enough to increase your faith, then draw your focus down to even simpler images: the smallest things God has given for our enjoyment and our nourishment. Jesus draws our focus down to the simplest images. Mustard seed. Mulberry tree.

If you can hold in your heart and mind these visible images of faith, you can do things *beyond* what you can see, things that for now you can only imagine. Things as miraculous as a tree uprooting itself to be planted in the sea. An odd image—but highly visible *in your mind’s eye*. And when we go beyond seeing with our eyes to seeing with our minds and hearts, then we share in the seeing of God, who imagined the universe out of nothing.

When Jesus gathered his disciples for their last meal together, he again drew their focus down to the simplest things they could see and touch and remember. Bread. Wine. If they could hold those images in their minds and hearts, they could hold a faith capable of imagining what seemed impossible: a body of believers spanning continents and centuries. A body that more than 2,000 years later gathers on this Sunday to take bread and wine together as the church worldwide. A strange thing to do, as strange as a tree uprooting itself and heading for the sea. Something imagined and then made a reality by a faith that is visible in the smallest things. A faith that is all around us, if we know where to look. Bread. Wine. Mulberry tree. Mustard seed.

This is not to say that we cannot go prospecting for information in bookstores, or in seminary either, for that matter. Can we benefit from reading and hearing the thoughts of others about how to develop a life in faith? Certainly. Can we grow in the study of the scripture and tradition that created the Christian church? Absolutely—thanks be to God!

But when we pray for increase of faith, we should pray with our eyes open: alert to where Jesus might be pointing, drawing our focus down, and down, to the simple and visible images of faith. Mustard seed. Mulberry tree. Bread. Wine. See the faith they hold; make it your faith; and share in the seeing of God, who imagines what is yet to be made of this earth, and of you. Amen.