

Do We Need Big Faith or a Living Faith?

Luke 17:1-19

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The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord 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.

- Luke 17:5-6, ESV

Is it okay to ask God to increase our faith, to give us more faith? The disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith. He did not rebuke them or deny them outright, but He does appear to be re-directing their thinking as to the nature of faith and the nature of their request. He tells them that if they had faith like a grain of mustard seed, they would be able to do very remarkable things.

What do we know about a mustard seed?

1. It's not very big. Jesus says elsewhere that it is the smallest of all seeds. (Mark 4:31)
2. It is alive. The difference between a mustard seed and a small pebble of the same size is that a mustard seed is alive; it has life in it.
3. A mustard seed works when it falls into the ground and dies, bringing forth new life from its brokenness. In John 12:24, Jesus compares Himself to a grain of wheat, which falls to earth and dies and, in doing so, brings forth much fruit.

So, while the disciples thought they needed more faith - and don't we all always think we need more? - Jesus knew they needed a different kind of faith. They needed a living, dying faith, which, even if it was small, was powerful indeed!

In this section, we can see some remarkable things which a mustard-seed faith empowers us to do:

1. A mustard-seed faith empowers us to forgive humbly, even seven times a day, because we're ready to die to our demands for satisfaction that someone else might live and be free. (vv. 3-4)
2. A mustard-seed faith empowers us to serve humbly and without thanks, knowing that our privilege to serve in the kingdom of God is something we don't deserve to have. (vv. 7-10)
3. A mustard-seed faith makes us thankful for the healing Jesus brings into our lives and leads us to fall at His feet and worship Him with gratitude. (vv. 11-19)

So, instead of asking God for more faith, let's make sure we understand what we really need: living, trusting faith, faith that's willing to die to self in order to bring glory to God and life to others, faith that's humble, thankful, forgiving and worshipful. That's mustard-seed faith, and we don't need much of it to make a huge impact in our lives and the lives of those around us!