

# Scripture Study

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



## Opening prayer

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

(Ps 95:1-2,6-9)

2 Timothy 1:6-8,13-14

**Luke 17:5-10**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- In our Gospel readings during these weeks of Ordinary Time, we are accompanying Jesus as he journeys toward Jerusalem and his Passion.
- The past six weeks have focused our attention on readings which pointed out the opposition to Jesus and his disciples. The Gospel now returns to the subject of renewal, focusing on the inward renewal of the disciples.
- In response to his disciples' request for *more* faith (verse 5), Jesus emphasizes rather the *quality* of the faith that they are to have (verse 6), needing only the tiniest amount, comparable to a mustard seed (see Matthew 13:31; Mark 4:31; Luke 13:19).
- The mulberry (or *sycamine*) tree Jesus refers to was known for its extensive root system. It was difficult to uproot, let alone grow planted in seawater. Even with the smallest amount of faith, impossible things can happen (see Matthew 19:26)!

## Questions:

- According to the First Reading from Habbakuk, what is the nature of faith? Why is it not the same as getting what want when you want it, or “naming and claiming” it? In what ways are we sometimes called to wait upon the Lord?
- In the Second Reading, what gifts did God give us (and not give) by virtue of our baptism and the other Sacraments? How does Paul say we are we to exercise them? To safeguard them?
- In the Gospel Reading, what discussion has just taken place right before this passage (Luke 17:1-4)?
- How might the disciples' plea of verse 5 relate to Jesus' statement in Luke 17:3-4? What does Jesus' response (verse 6) really mean?
- What attitude should Jesus' followers have in following him (verses 7-10)? How do you feel when you have done something virtuous? How does this passage say you should behave? What do you think of Jesus' recommendations about your attitude about being good or in serving the Lord?
- How is this attitude reminiscent of that of Mary, the Mother of Our Lord (Luke 1:38)? Of John the Baptist (John 3:30)? St. Paul (Philippians 3:8)?
- Which quality of discipleship do you have the most difficulty with? How might dealing with this affect the other qualities?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 162**

## Closing Prayer

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!**

*'Everything is possible for anyone who has faith.' The words are Christ's. How is it that you don't say to him with the Apostles: 'Increase my faith!?' -St. Josemaria Escriva*

# "Lord, increase our faith"

**Scripture:** *Luke 17:5-10*

**Meditation:** What is the greatest force in the world? Jesus tells us that with faith we can do far more than we could accomplish by our own strength; faith can even move mountains and trees (see Mt 17:20; Mk 11:23)! What kind of faith did Jesus have in mind here? By faith Jesus meant more than just belief in God and in his power. Jesus spoke of faith as something dynamic, active, and very alive. Expectant faith is a gift God gives us for overcoming obstacles that stand in the way of doing God's will. It enables us to cooperate with God's grace and power for accomplishing whatever God wants us to do. To illustrate the powerful force of faith, Jesus used the image of an uprooted tree. Have you ever seen an uprooted tree caused by a sudden wind storm or flash flood? On another occasion Jesus illustrated the force of faith with the incredible image of a mountain transplanted: "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." (Mt 17:20) The term "mountain remover" was used in Jesus' time for describing someone who could solve great problems and difficulties. Don't we often encounter challenges and difficulties which seem beyond our power to handle? What appears impossible to human power is possible to those who believe in God's power.

Faith is a gift freely given by God to help us know God personally, to understand his truth, and to live in the power of his love. God expects more from us than we can do by ourselves. Faith in God is the key



for removing obstacles and difficulties which keep us from doing his will. We are his servants, and he is ever ready to work through us and in us for his glory. For faith to be effective it must be linked with trust and obedience — an active submission to God and a willingness to do whatever he commands. Do you trust in God's grace and power to resist temptation and to overcome obstacles in doing his will?

Jesus' parable of the dutiful laborers seems to suggest that we ought to always give our best, regardless of what we can expect in return. But, aren't we like the laborer in Jesus' parable who expected fair compensation for his day's work? How unfair for the master to compel him to give more than what was expected! Don't we love to assert our rights: "I will give only what is required and no more!" But who can satisfy the claims of love? Jesus used this parable of the dutiful servant to explain that we can never put God in our debt or make the claim that God owes us something. We must regard ourselves as God's servants, just as Jesus came "not to be served, but to serve" (Mt 20:28). Service of God and of neighbor is both a voluntary or free act which

springs from a generous and merciful heart and a sacred duty which we owe to an all-merciful and gracious God. One can volunteer for public service or be compelled to do service for one's country. Likewise, God expects us to give him the worship and praise which is his due. And he gladly accepts the free-will offering of our lives to him and his service. What makes our offering pleasing to God is the love we express in the gift of self-giving. True love is sacrificial, generous, and selfless.

How can we love others selflessly and unconditionally? God himself is *Love* (1 Jn 4:16) and he fills our hearts with the boundless love that gives what is good for the sake of others. *If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us* (1 Jn 4:12). God honors the faithful servant who loves mercifully and gives generously. He wants to bless us richly with his gifts and graces and to work through and in us for his glory. We must remember, however, that God can never be indebted to us. We have no claim on him. His love compels us to give him our best! And when we have done our best, we have simply done our duty. We can never outmatch God in generous giving and loving service. Does the love of God compel you to give your best?

*"Lord, fill my heart with love, gratitude and generosity. Make me a faithful and zealous servant for you. May I generously pour out my life in loving service for you and for others, just as you have so generously poured yourself out for me."*

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