



Sunday, October 5, 2025

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Give us more faith, the disciples begged Jesus in our gospel lesson today. Give us more faith. That's also the cry of our hearts as well, is it not? If only we had more faith, a deeper faith, a stronger faith, think of all the problems that we would probably solve. Imagine the mountains we could move. We would be able to figure out how to attract youth and young families to church. We would have the biggest and best mission budget that would serve our neighbors far and wide, right? We would tackle the problems of the world with such confidence and boldness with a prophetic voice and stance. Oh, if only we had more faith.

Faith means a lot of things, different things to different people. To some faith are those beliefs, that form the tenets of our religion, what we believe, like in the Apostles Creed, right? The larger and smaller catechism of Luther, the Augsburg Confession, those kinds of things. Or faith some people think is what we practice. Attending worship on Sunday, reading the Bible, doing things that shows our commitment to Christ like feeding the hungry, visiting the imprisoned, tending to the foreigner, clothing the naked, those essential acts of mercy. Faith is belief in confidence and trust in something unseen we are told, something that hasn't happened yet.

So, what is faith? Faith is all of this, and yet it is more. In the New Testament, faith is most often linked to a dynamic relationship with Jesus and how we place our trust in Him. Faith is following the footsteps of Jesus, listening to Him, asking Him questions, seeking guidance from Him, being forgiven by Him, being there with the Holy Spirit to act in the world through His acts and deeds in us. Real living faith in God expresses itself in how we treat each other. Remember what Paul said to Timothy, his protege in the lesson that we heard this morning. And he says, I very much want to see you so I can be filled with joy. I remember your true faith, that faith that was first lived in your grandmother Lois, in your mother Eunice. And I know you now have that same faith. So, what is Paul doing here? He is describing a faith that thrives in and by connection to others. With Timothy and his grandmother,



Sunday, October 5, 2025

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Lois, his mother, Eunice, faith that is practiced in family settings, passed on person to person.

To practice our faith, we simply need to be together. Faith cannot grow in isolation. That's why it is important for us to gather to worship and fellowship in person. It's easy, isn't it, to get into a slump and not come to worship? Let other things take priority in our lives. But the way to restore that energy and faith that Jesus wants us to have is to show up anyway. I learned this lesson by going to the gym. I hate going to the gym. I hate it. But my muscles rebel, my mind wants to find excuses, but you know what? I show up anyway. I force myself to move beyond my comfort zone and encourage my fellow gym rat. And then you know what? I am left transformed after an hour. That's day after day, week after week, month after month, and then all of a sudden, the changes happen.

Woody Allen said that 90% of success is showing up. You don't want to come to Church on Sunday morning? You all feel negative, depressed or stressed? Well, that's fine. Show up anyway. The issue is, as I see this, if we wait for things to be just right or perfect before we make the commitments, we're going to be waiting a very long time. We want faith. Remember what Gandhi says, we need to be the change that we want to see in the world. We have to be the faith that we want to see in the world. Do we want a faith that moves mountains? To achieve this, we have to show up for God and each other. We have to be willing to live in the mess, the discomfort, the dissatisfaction in order to move forward to a more rewarding or fulfilling life together. Because you know what? There's no magic potion. There's no transport that will take us from our current predicament and put us where we want to be. But that's just not the way it works. If we want to get to the promised land, we must practice a living faith that shows up no matter what, that rolls up our sleeves, that we take each other's hand, and we take it step by step through the muck in the mire. And we are not alone in this. Jesus is there with us leading the way.



Sunday, October 5, 2025

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Paul describes it to Timothy in this way. This is what I remind you, to keep using the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you. Let it grow as a small flame grows into a fire. The flame that we feel may be small, but coming together in our living, collective, communal faith with each other in Jesus, we can fan that flame into a fire. And that is what practicing faith is all about. If you have faith in someone, if you believe in someone, we want to bring out the best in them. And the more connected we are to each other, the more committed we are to each other through Jesus, our Lord, the more we become that vision of what God has created in us, the kind of faith that God wants us to live out. What does Jesus say about practicing faith? By following him, we know that Jesus did not go to easy places. He did not do what was necessarily comfortable. Jesus didn't play it safe. He went to those broken places in the world. He walked on the storms. He hung out with the outsiders in the oppressed places. And yet Jesus is still here with us, with our fears, with our sadness, our confusion, and here, with not yet of our life together.

So how do we fan that flame into a fire? We come to church anyway. We cannot change. It cannot change unless we do this together. We have all our hands-on deck. Everyone matters. And everyone makes a difference in this life of faith. How do we practice faith? As Jesus describes to His good faith in the gospel lesson, that a good and faithful slave just does what they're supposed to do humbly and lives out their lives in the service without thinking twice. We want to deepen our relationships with each other here now, day after day, week after week, month after month. In this way, those mustard seeds get planted. And the seedlings are watered and fed. And we watch as those seeds grow. And remember how Jesus described another place in the gospels, that how that mustard seed, the smallest seed of all, will become the finest and greatest of all living trees creating a home for all. And that is the kind of faith that God is calling us to have. Amen.