

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, Gospel Year C

SEEKERS AND SERVANTS

Luke 17:5-10

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Glenn L. Monson

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a[a] mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

7 "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? 8 Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? 9 Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'"



DIAGNOSIS: Futile Seekers

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Seeking Control

We, like the disciples, often long for more faith. This seems a rather noble desire until we come clean about why we often wish for this: we actually long for control. Perhaps, we think, if we had more faith we could control more of our chaotic existence. Perhaps we could control sickness and health, good fortune and bad, the weather!, all sorts of things. Perhaps God would even grant us a new and greater status in the divine pecking order!

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Seeking Praise

The more we fixate on “our faith” the more we are drawn away from the One who is the object of our faith. Building up our faith becomes our goal, so that our spiritual biceps and quads

begin to show. We find ourselves standing in the spiritual mirror admiring how fine we are beginning to look as our spiritual “muscles” develop. My, what a fine specimen of faith we are becoming. Are others beginning to notice our faith? We claim not to care, but care we do. Is God beginning to take note? He better!

Step 3: The Seeker Is Lost

With faith as our idol, the Living Christ is no longer of any use to us. We are in charge of the household, we think. We are the faith-full ones now. Perhaps God will notice our faith and become our servant! Isn't God now our debtor?—we who have done all that is expected—we who have become such superior examples of faith. Oh, how deluded we are. We are lost in our foolish pursuit of piety. The idol we have fashioned crumbles. Our faith falters. Without Christ as our source, we are dried up.

PROGNOSIS: Fruitful Servants

***Step 4:
Initial
Prognosis
(Eternal
Solution): A
Servant
Finds
Us***



Christ reveals on the Cross that he came not to be served, but

to serve and to give up his life as a ransom for many. He reveals himself as the One who calls us to his table, washes our feet, and gives to us his body and blood. On the Cross Jesus empties himself, taking the role of a “worthless slave.” He reveals the Spirit as the One who has already given us the mustard seed of faith that we need to be planted in Christ. We finally see that we are the debtors, not God.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): The Seeker Is at Peace

No longer are we fixated on our faith. Rather, we are focused on the One who is faithful, the Suffering Servant of all. We understand that we have already been given all the faith we need to move even trees and mountains, and we are content with what we have been given. We trust Christ, not our faith, and so when our faith falters, we do not despair, for Christ does not falter, even when we do. We are at peace.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Seeking to Be of Service

Our identity in God’s household is clear to us—we are servants of the Most High God. We take delight in serving in God’s house. We also are those who cast mulberry trees into the sea by means of the mustard seed of faith we have been given. With this in mind, we are not afraid to uproot the injustices in our world that call out to be cast into the abyss. The call of Jesus becomes a call to serve boldly, and boldly we do.