



October 7, 2007

Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

Luke 17:5-10

“Need More? Got something!”

On Sunday morning, while James was enjoying sleeping late, his wife was trying to wake him up. James yawned and said, “Why are you waking me up? I want to sleep more.” She said, “Honey, this is Sunday. We got to go to church.” He said, “I don’t want to go.” She said, “Ok, tell me three reasons why you don’t want to go.” He answered, “First, there is nothing I can get there. Two, I don’t like the people. Third, No one likes me.” Raising her voice she said, “Let me tell you three reasons why you should go to church.” First, it will be something good. Second, there are still some people who really do like you. And third, you’re the pastor!”

I have thought we would not have many people today, specially a day like today, long weekend, big festival, beautiful weather. I understand how difficult it is to come to church on this day. If I were you, I wouldn’t be here, even though you are not a pastor. I admire you for being here.

Let’s take a look the Bible passage we read today.

The disciples said to Jesus, “Increase our faith” Why did they say that? We need to see the previous verses to figure out their request.

Jesus said to his disciples, *“Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a milestone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same*

person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive."

When the disciples heard that, they might have thought "O, Jesus, NO, We can't." "It is not possible." So they asked Jesus to increase their faith.

When Jesus was asked by his disciples to increase their faith, he replied, "*If you had faith the size of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea.' And it would obey you.*"

Many people interpret Jesus' saying that Jesus rebuked them because they had no faith. They didn't even have faith comparable to a tiny mustard seed.

I agree with this kind of interpretation on some points. But I want us to see this story in a different perspective. I really wonder why Jesus said it like that. What did he try to say that? What did it mean? Did he really want to rebuke his disciple because they did not have any tiny, little faith which can make something impossible happen? If that is true that his disciples or we can not do something great, or difficult job, because we don't even have a faith the size of tiny mustard seed? There is no one in this planet that has faith, because no one can make a mulberry tree to be uprooted and planted in the sea. Therefore I want to interpret this story as not a message of blaming, but a message of encouragement.

Let me explain this.

First, I think Jesus was pointing out that they misunderstood about faith.

Think about what they said. They asked Jesus to increase their faith in order to measure up to Jesus' challenge. They meant that "we need more faith; you got to give us more." The thing they misunderstood was that they considered Faith as a subject to give and take, increase and decrease, or emptied and refilled like pop. Faith is not the thing we can give to someone and take from somebody. What is faith? There are so many ways and ideas that we can use to identify the meaning of faith. Let's see what Bible teach us.

Hebrews 11:1-2

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, for by it the ancients received a good testimony."

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. What does it mean? It means, "We can not see faith, we can not show others our faith. But we have faith, because we hope."

Faith is not the things which we can give and take, we can see and show, but faith is the things we hope.

When Jesus' disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith, they misunderstood something about faith. They had illusions that they couldn't forgive the people who sin so many times a day, because they didn't have enough faith. But the fact is that they didn't want to forgive them; they were not hoping to forgive their enemies. It was not a matter of faith which can give and take or increase and decrease.

Think about us. When we have some difficult situations, when we face some kind of challenge like forgiving someone I hate, as Jesus illustrated it. We could easily say, "Wow, I can't. I have no such faith. But the truth is that I don't want to forgive.

Why can't we embrace other people who sin seven times a day, and someone who has a different culture, and language? It is not a matter of lack of faith. Sometimes we are trying to hide in areas, as religion and faith. We are ascribing our bad habit, bad attitude to the matter of religious things, our lack of faith.

The second misunderstanding which his disciples had was that they thought they had very little faith. If they would have more faith, they could do it.

Then, Jesus said to his disciples, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea.'" And it would obey you.

I want to interpret what Jesus was saying in a more positive way like that you've something – you don't need more faith; you've already got faith like a tiny mustard seed.

If we believe that we can not do anything without huge amounts of faith, there is nothing we can do on earth.

Let me give you an example. Today the Karen Church is worshiping with us here. A year ago, when the Puday family came to our community, I remember that many people among our congregation volunteered to help this family in so many ways. I don't want to talk about what we did because we know that. I was so, so impressed.

Do you think the support we provided was possible because we had huge faith? NO. Sorry, I don't think you have such huge faith. But you stepped forward and

helped anyway. I believe we did have tiny faith like a mustard seed. That tiny seed made us do that huge project. You got something!!

But don't misunderstand that you can do anything by yourself. We need to know it was only possible with the help of Holy Spirit who planted a tiny seed of faith in your heart, helping us yesterday, today, and in the future.

I want to finish my sermon with the message Philippians 1:6

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

You need more? You've got something.