

Faith as a Mustard Seed

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 18th March 2012

Intro

- How much faith will it take to see our neighbours and family won for the Lord?
- How much faith will it take to see cancers healed and the dead raised?
- How much faith will it take to see Brynmawr, South Wales and Wales converted?
- How much faith will it take to see the nations of the world won for Christ?
- I have brought the answer with me. (Bring out a huge box with a jar in it- take a mustard seed out of the jar & show it to the congregation.
- This morning we will look at the faith it takes to shake the world.

Read Luke 17:1-19

You don't need humungous faith to see amazing things- 'faith as a mustard seed'-v6

- My eating of a chillie pepper in Sierra Leone, thinking it was a tomato and my head blowing off- a little goes a long way. Same with Tabasco sauce. Same with our faith.
- Mustard seed- minute- grows into a tree the birds can nest in- a little goes a long way- parables of the kingdom of heaven like a mustard seed or leaven in dough- a little bit works it's way through the batch- you only need a little bit to see huge results. Are we prepared to take our little bit of faith and use it?
- Mulberry tree uprooting itself and planting itself in the sea- something outrageously crazy- same as the mountain moving illustration used by Jesus in Mk 11:20-26 & Matt 21:20-22 (when Jesus curses the fig tree and it withers the next day) as well as in Mt 17:20- faith as small as a mustard seed will move a mountain (when he gives the reason they can't drive the demon out of the boy as unbelief).
- When you compare the size of a mustard seed to a mountain it is crazy. We often think a mountain sized problem needs mountain sized faith, but Jesus was saying that just a small amount of faith applied to the situation will get the job done.
- Satan's lie to stop us believing in the first place. Fleas in a jar
- Our idea of 'super-Christian', the one with mega-faith levels unachievable by the rest of mankind. Someone on GodTV- an evangelist with mega faith. God wants 'ordinary people' doing 'extra-ordinary things'. Read- James 5:17- 'Elijah was a man with a nature like ours & he prayed earnestly that it would not rain & it did not rain on the land for three years and six months'- this is in the context of praying for each other for healing- pray for one another that you may be healed. We think of Elijah as a super-saint but in reality he was just a man 'with a nature like ours'- he knew what it was to be human- especially with Jezebel after him! Read Acts 3:12 -'why do you look so intently at us as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?'- Peter and John just took a mustard seed level of faith and 'had a go'- we can do the same. Acts 14:15 – Paul and Barnabas in Lystra treated as gods when God heals a lame man through Paul, their response 'We also are men with the same nature as you'- i.e. We are just normal people- we simply put our mustard seed of faith in Jesus and this was the result. Culture of miracles as normal for us.
- We haven't got to move the mountains ourselves-leave results with God
- How big is your God? God of surprises. Can do exceedingly more than we ask or think- Eph2:20. Increase your expectations of God- allow Him to surprise you- give Him room.

Faith is active, not passive- 'say to this mulberry tree'- v6

- Speaking to the mulberry tree and to the mountain. Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. -believing is not kept to ourselves but spoken out. My friend speaking out 'I believe there is someone here who.. has terrible toothache'- person healed. What do we need to speak out? Perhaps sharing on a Sunday is the start- giving out what God gives us. James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. Coming forwards for prayer is a faith step of obedience and it brings blessing with it.
- We need to speak faith out and live it out rather than be passive- me in Uganda not trying to raise dead baby, but later praying for dead cat and dead person. If we don't pray for any dead to be raised we won't raise the dead, if we don't pray for the sick we won't see them healed. John Wimber.
- MATTHEW 10:8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.
- MATTHEW 28:18-20 Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.
- JOHN 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.
- Go show yourselves to the priests- i.e. Go in faith to Jerusalem as if you have been healed- just like 'get up' to a lame man or 'stretch out your hand' to the man with withered hand etc. The response of faith is important.
- Jesus' other parable here about waiting on our master before we get our own food- faith is linked to obedience- Jesus came not to do his own will but the will of the Father, and He also came to serve the needs of the people- the result was signs and wonders. For our faith to increase our desire to serve God and others must increase too. We learn to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit and trust God with the results.
- The obedience of faith- Rom 1:5, 16:26- faith in God results in obedience. There was a fullness of healing that the one leper had because they were not concerned merely about their own needs but with the needs of the master- Jesus- only one came back to give glory to God. The testimony seals the healing by giving God his due and so the person's faith is strengthened as a result with the words of the master 'arise go your way, your faith has made you well'. The parable of the servant was fulfilled in this man because faith is linked with obedience.
- Jesus sent out 12 and 70/72 after giving them authority- they had a context as they went out. We can do the same- we have been also given the authority by Jesus- Matt 28- as we go on a short-term mission so faith is put into practice, or we can choose to be constantly on mission as a daily choice- see situations and people 'through harvest eyes' as Rob Westall encouraged us to do.
- **Applic-** begin new habits of faith. Learn to take risks and be obedient to H.S. Do something new in God. Step into the unknown like Abraham- he is your dad after all. Use the mustard seed you have.

Faith can be increased- v5 'increase our faith'

- Jesus didn't rebuke them for asking this question but gave them something to increase their faith levels. We can ask the same in prayer. Mark 9:24 -'I do believe, help my unbelief' the man with the epileptic son asked of Jesus- we can too.

- Faith is a muscle which needs to be exercised and grows as a result.
- Faith is a gift from God, and as such we can ask God to increase it, as well as position ourselves in the right place to receive it. Scripture says that faith comes by hearing the word of God- Rom 10:17- as we listen, read, meditate on, digest, pray through God's word so our faith will increase.
- **Saving faith** is a gift- see Eph 2:8 – saved by grace through faith and this is not of ourselves it is a gift that no man should boast.
- We have a '**measure of faith**'. The general faith we have as Christians in our everyday lives has also been allotted by God, so we cannot be proud in our level of faith as if it is of ourselves- Rom 12:3. We are not to be passive in response to the fact that our faith is a gift from God but active- Rom 12:6-8 encourages us to put that faith into operation by service using gifts God has given us faith for- as we use our gift in faithfulness so our gift and faith grows.
- There is also in 1Cor 12:9- the **gift of faith**- This is a specific spiritual gift some have. We need this gift and can ask for it- let's do so- faith for provision, faith for miracles etc. We are encouraged to eagerly desire spiritual gifts- 1Cor 14:1; 12:31. 1Cor 14:13 encourages those with tongues to pray to have the gift of interpretation- in the same way we can pray for the gift of faith.
- Acts 6:5 Stephen a man 'full of **faith and the Holy Spirit**' chosen as one of the seven to administer funds to the widows. Being filled with faith and with the Holy Spirit are synonymous here- God fills us and the result is faith is released. The result in Acts 6:8 is that Stephen full of faith (grace) and power did great wonders and signs among the people- we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to see our faith bearing the fruit God intends. The more we are filled with the Holy Spirit the more we will see signs and wonders- we need to be clothed with power from on high.
- **Impartation of faith** through someone else's faith- Rom 1:11-12 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong- that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. Faith comes through witnessing and hearing testimony etc.
- **Deal with the doubts**- keep doubts in check- Jesus only let 3 come in the room to pray Mark 5:36- do not be afraid, only believe to Jairus about his daughter- permitted none to follow him except Peter James and John and he put all the wailing people out and those that mocked him when he said she was just sleeping.
- **Applic**- get some testimony books- great missionaries- revival books etc. Watch the reverse missionaries program & get inspired! Give testimonies, take opportunities & stretch your faith muscles. Get filled with H.S.

Conclusion

- Only a little faith goes a long way
- Faith is active
- Faith can grow