

Prayer of Preparation: *Lord, increase our faith. Amen.*

Increase our faith. The apostles could have asked for anything in the world; yet they asked Jesus to *increase our faith.*

They could have asked for long life, but they asked Jesus to *increase our faith.*

They could have asked for more money, but they asked Jesus to *increase our faith.*

They could have asked for healing, but they asked Jesus to *increase our faith.*

They could have asked for kingdoms to rule, but they asked Jesus to *increase our faith.*

They could have asked for the release of their people, but they asked Jesus to *increase our faith.*

They could have asked for their oppressors to be put to death, but they asked Jesus to *increase our faith.*

The list of what they could ask for is endless, yet of all the things the apostles could have asked for, they asked Jesus to *increase our faith.*

That's because the work of kingdom begins with us, all of Jesus' disciples working towards and working for the kingdom of God. In order to look into a broken world and know that the kingdom is at hand, in order to know that all that is needed for our journey is just a little bit more faith, we must all cry out to Jesus to *increase our faith.*

All of us have had the same experience. We all know what the apostles were feeling when they asked Jesus to increase their faith. The apostles were being sent out to do the impossible, to preach the unbelieve, and to heal what seemed hopeless. And they were asked to do it on faith. So they asked for some more...they asked for more faith.

Facing the impossible, the apostles asked for faith. Facing the unbelievable, the apostles asked for more faith. Facing the hopeless, the apostles asked for more faith. More faith to lift them up. More faith to carry them forward. More faith for themselves. More faith for their families. More faith for their communities. More faith...

This is where the gospel shines a light on us and on our hearts. When we are troubled, do we cry out for God to increase our faith...or do we try to solve our problems with our own understanding? Do we turn to the source of our strength and power or do we assume we have enough strength and power and cry out Lord, *increase our faith.*

Jesus answers the disciples request with two parables, both of which are intended to teach us that as we grow our faith grows. As we see God working in our life, our faith grows. As prayers are answered, as healing begins, as restoration takes place...our faith in God's goodness grows.

So, what's with the mustard seed parable? The mustard seed is tiny. What we see is the shell - the mustard seed is inside the shell. So as small as what you see is, the mustard seed is actually smaller. That's our faith at the beginning of our journey. But once that seed is planted what happens is that the seed brings forth a

tree that grows so big a person can use it to hide. Let that sink in...the seed grows into a tree so big a person can use it to hide.

Jesus is telling the disciples that our faith in God should grow so big that we can use it for shelter, to hide, to find consolation. And we can use our faith as a source of power. A power so big that if we tell a mountain to move, the mountain will get out of our way. As our faith grows our power to do what God calls us to do and to be who God calls us to be increases...and bears fruit.

Hear the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, God will increase our faith. God will provide the faith we are called to grow into and the increase we need. We don't and can't claim faith that never stumbles or makes a mistake. But we can and should grow into faith that serves and even move those places and situations in our lives which are as big as mountains and seem unmovable.

Response to the Word: Lord, increase our faith. *Amen.*