

Increase Our Faith! (Part 2)

Luke: All Things New



Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Luke 17:5-6



Big Idea

Jesus says that a little faith can accomplish much. But what exactly does it accomplish? Throwing mulberry trees into the sea would be a spectacular display of power, but is that it? As we'll see, faith is not first nor ultimately to effect great signs . . . but great love! That's the point!

(1) Mustard Seeds

The mustard seed was proverbial in Jesus' day for its small size. It was the smallest seed known of around Palestine in Jesus' day. When the seed was held in one's hand it would look something like a speck of dust—barely visible. Now, it seems to me that this image Jesus gives us here of faith the size of mustard seed is used by Him to cut in two different directions.

Direction #1: The Smallness of Their Faith—If even a ridiculously small amount of faith could accomplish such great feats, how small, how microscopic must the Apostles' faith be if they couldn't even dream of doing such a thing?

Direction #2: The Greatness of Their God—Such little faith can manifest such magnificent results not because faith is just that potent, but because God is just that great! Little faith in a great God goes an unimaginably long way!

(2) Mulberry Trees

The grave error, it seems to me, in the way prosperity gospel and word-of-faith preachers interpret this text and others like it is that they take them to mean there's almost this sort of raw, impersonal power out there in the universe. And it can be harnessed and manipulated by faith. You can grab ahold of it by faith and subject it to your will. They see in these verses that God has given them a blank check, as it were. And faith is how you write on that thing and take it to the bank. In the end, such conceptions of God, the gospel, and faith become a trojan horse for greed. It might look like you are trusting in, serving, loving, and worshiping God. But truly there is nothing here beyond worship of self!

Corrective Principle #1: Faith Is Abiding in a Person—When we treat faith as if it were the way we harness raw power and subject it to our will or the way we cash a blank check from God for whatever amount we desire, we completely miss the fact that faith is first and foremost and fundamentally knowing, loving, trusting, resting, abiding in a person: namely, Jesus Christ. Any authority or power we wield in the spiritual and physical dimensions ultimately comes not from us, but from Him. And, therefore, it is ultimately subject not to our will, but to His!

Corrective Principle #2: Love Is the Deeper Miracle—We would get all excited about a literal mulberry tree being thrown into the sea. What a miracle we would say! But Jesus gets far more excited about a person who learns the way of forgiveness. That's the deeper miracle in God's economy.

Reflection Questions



- Are you pursuing the surface miracles of signs and wonders and external healings and things but not all that interested in the deeper miracles of heart change and forgiveness and love?
- When you pray, are you requesting things merely out of love for yourself or out of love for God and others?
- Are you abiding in Jesus—in His word and will? Are you surrendered to Him, giving Him the first and last word? Are you trusting Him with everything in your life?
- Have you ever seen God “do the miracle”? Have you ever prayed and had Him answer in an undeniably supernatural way? Tell the story. What happened? What role, do you think, did your faith play in this?
- Have you ever asked for something from God “in faith” and not received it? What's something you've prayed for over and over again and it seems God has not granted it? How does this make you feel? How do you interpret/understand these things? Is God not being true to His promises like the one in v. 6 of our text?