

Grace and peace to you from God, our creator, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ  
Amen.

In our gospel story today, the apostles approach Jesus asking him how they can increase their faith!

He replies to them with this parable of the mustard seed  
And also, of a story of a man whose servant comes in after working in the field that day

And as Jesus talks about how this master might treat his servant, I believe the two situations he presents are rhetorical

“Would you have this servant, after working in the field all day, immediately come in, and sit down and say to them, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table.’”

Jesus says  
“or wouldn’t you rather  
Wouldn’t you be more likely to have that servant come in and say to him  
‘I’ve been waiting for you to come in, I’m really hungry, can you get my food ready, and serve me while I eat dinner  
Oh, and when I’m done get some food for yourself too’”

It’s obvious what the better thing to do is, what Jesus would want us to do  
But he isn’t necessarily trying to confront us with which we would do

Remember this is about faith

This is about our faith  
We are the servants coming in from the field

How do you think God will respond to you when you come in from the field after working all day?

We are the servants who come in after working and would instantly go to serve our master

Jesus is telling us this parable about faith  
And making it obvious for us,  
That after we have worked in the field  
We will hear ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table.’

That is the response we will hear from God

And this is not about what will happen to us either

Again, it is about our faith  
It is about the POWER of our faith

These apostles want to know how to have a strong faith  
And are given this example of a servant going out to work in the field day after day

Who would then come in, ready to serve his master

And it's paired with this parable of the mustard seed encourages us in our faith, and is telling us  
the smallest bit of faith is powerful  
and creates change

Now the mustard seed is small, it is a tiny seed,  
And it grows into a large shrub

But let's think about mustard for a second  
The mustard that we have in our fridge  
That bright yellow sauce  
That we might put on our burgers or fries

Not only does this small seed create something else  
It is bright and colorful  
But it is flavorful

A small amount gives a big kick

Now our faith

Our faith is also strong

And we don't need to increase our faith! As the apostles are asking from Jesus

But we need to put ACTION to our faith  
Put that faith that we already have to work

Great things happen when we put our faith into action  
even just the smallest bit of faith, can move mountains,

Today we will have the blessing of the animals after church, and we will bless our furry friends,  
our creatures that we care for,  
And that care for us

Some of you know, I got a puppy a few months ago, his name is Pepperoni  
And he has been such a blessing in my life

It is new to care for this animal that depends on me

But I also realize that he improves my own life  
As I care for him, I am moved to ACTION

He doesn't want to wait for me to feed him, or take him outside

And so, I have found as I am caring for him,  
that he kind of reminds me that it is lunch time for both of us

And he reminds me it's time for us both to go for a walk outside,  
And I have been getting to enjoy more of the beauty of nature

This is just a small example of how being a pet parent brings us to care for another life

Many of you in this room are parents, or surrogate parents that know the magnitude of caring  
for another life

And I even think of how difficult it can be sometimes to tend to our plants and to our gardens  
Having to be dedicated to watering it, and thinking of how much sunlight it gets

And I think that when we are called to care for another, when we are called to care for God's  
creation

We are called into action

We are moved to action beyond ourselves

As a community, we are gathered here today, giving each other energy into the ministries that  
we serve throughout the week

As we sit here together and as we are gathered online, I believe this energy here and that we  
put into our faith as action

That it creates change in the world

Sometimes as we think of creation and the world at this current time,  
And the issues that we face,

It can seem like a lot to overcome

Sometimes our small acts of kindness  
Seem very small,  
We want to make real change

We have to have faith that our action, no matter how small,  
can create change

Change that we may not even see in our lifetime

But we have faith, and we have hope,

And we just keep going

We work in the field day after day,

And we know

Like the mustard seed,  
Like mustard  
our faith has bite, it has zest  
and it has the power to make change

And I don't know about you all

But whenever I eat mustard,  
I spill it on my clothes, and it leaves a stain I will never get out

..so in that way it makes change

I am in a stewardship class this semester

and already after the first week I am learning this new definition of stewardship

I am learning that to be a steward the definition of the word is to care for another's belongings

Everything that we have belongs to God

All that we have

All that we are

Stewardship is about the privilege and the responsibility of caring for all that has been entrusted to us

Our money, our time, our voice  
All of creation...the environment  
Our animals and the creatures of this earth  
All are for us to care for

Today as we celebrate Francis of Assisi (his feast day is later this week)  
We remember how Francis took seriously that God created us all  
And that everything that is on this earth belongs to God

And we trust and believe in that  
And today we celebrate and lift that up as we bless the animals and think of God's creation

And we have faith that our care and our work is important and powerful and creates changes

So remember that as you go from here

And may the faith that is in your heart go with you, to keep your hearts and minds in Christ  
Jesus our Lord.  
Amen.