

## **Increase Our Faith!**

Lord, increase my faith! Who among us here hasn't at one time or another uttered those words as a desperate plea especially when we're overwhelmed with all we should do as a Christian. In the portion of Scripture before today's reading Jesus has warned his disciples not to be the reason for causing someone to lose their faith. He then tells them that they are to forgive again and again when the offender repents. It's no wonder they cry out to Jesus to increase their faith!

There are many days that I feel like those disciples and wonder if I'm up to the task that God has called me to do. Being a Christian is hard work and sometimes we wonder if we can ever live up to the expectations that Jesus has for us.

But then Jesus reminds the disciples and us that faith is just doing your job, doing what's expected of you not because you want to be rewarded, but because it needs to be done. Faith is doing those things that are right in front of you that need to be done. These things we can do. Too often we think of discipleship as being able to those heroic things—like Moses parting the Red Sea, David killing Goliath, Peter healing cripples.

Faith can be pretty ordinary. Doing even the simplest things in faith can have a huge impact. Sometimes we don't think about what we do out in the world in our jobs, with our families or in our communities has anything to do with our Christian faith. Do you see doing your job to the best of your ability even when you don't like the work and can't stand your bosses as an act of faith? Do you see taking your elderly parents to the doctor, out shopping, or just taking the time

to talk to them when you have a million other things to do as an act of faith? Do you see helping to clean the ditch along the highway as an act of faith? It is through these ordinary acts that many of us wouldn't even consider to be acts of a faithful disciple that God is working in the world to care for the world and all that God loves.

While faith can't be quantified it can suffer from disuse. Just like any other spiritual practice such as praying and tithing; faith becomes "stronger" the more we use it. An argument one of my systematics professors would use was to tell us that either you're married or you're not. On your fiftieth wedding anniversary you aren't any more married than you were on your wedding day. However your relationship has changed and deepened over the years. That's how I view faith. I can't get any more of it; I don't need any more of it, but the more I use it the stronger it becomes.

To be more faithful is to recognize all of the opportunities that God gives us so that we can do what needs to be done willingly and joyfully. We do our work to the best of our ability. We care for those who the rest of the world has forgotten or labeled as worthless—the vulnerable, the lonely, the friendless. We keep the world going by listening to the other and finding a way to work together for the sake of the world.

Living our faith takes us on an adventure. It's heading out the door putting one foot in front of the other trusting in the future that God is preparing for us even though we can't see it. We go out each day looking for ways to partner with God to meet the various challenges along the way whether it's helping someone at

work or forgiving for the umpteenth time the person who has wronged us and seeing these as opportunities to grow as disciples and witnesses that God is present in the world and working for good.

I can't do all of these things on my own—even having faith is a gift from God; so I turn to the meaning of the Third Article of the Creed when I become overwhelmed. “I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church day after day he fully forgives my sins and the sins of all believers. On the last day he will raise me and all the dead and give me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.”