

When the Lord says to Habakkuk to write the vision and wait, what do we hear—is God talking about our vision or God’s?

For Israel, the vision was God’s—

Shalom – peace.

Jesus’ teachings are rife with encouragements to

live in peace with one another

This peace is not the absence of conflict

but an abiding sense of gratitude

for the care of God toward us.

When the Psalmist declares,

*Take delight in the LORD,
and the Lord will give you the desires of your heart,*

do we ask ourselves what are the

desires of our hearts?

The Psalmist’s desire is not to fret but to live

calmly confident in God’s presence.

What does it mean to us that we are the disciples

of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

in the words of the epistle to Timothy?

Jesus reminds us that he calls us not we him.

Are we grateful –

are we keenly aware that we live in a

state of grace?

Does this awareness prompt us

*to serve and seek Christ
in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves?*

What does it mean for us to live

*for the sake of the promise of life
that is in Christ Jesus?*

What is that promise?

Jesus says it's the assurance that we are cared for:

I am the door;

meaning metaphorically in Greek

*“I am an opportunity”
whoever enters through me will be
rescued, healed, and preserved.*

They will come and go freely and will find good pastures.

Good pastures are where sheep feed on plenty without fear.

When Jesus calls us to have faith that uproots trees,

what do we suppose he means?

When Jesus calls us slaves do we cringe and

back away from his message of faith or

do we explore it more deeply for his meaning?

Brian Brent Driggers, Lutheran New Testament professor,

offers the following reflection on the questions arising from

today's gospel:

“This week’s reading contains a couple of potentially difficult

metaphors [comparisons].

First, consider...

*If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this
mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,
and it would obey you’ⁱⁱ*

To be frank, I sometimes wish that Jesus had not said this! ...

Especially when read literally, it can distort faith into a kind of magic...

Of course, Luke does not mean to conflate faith with magic.

He is speaking in metaphor...

What is Jesus trying to say about faith in these verses?

At the very least, Jesus is saying that faith is not, fundamentally,

something we quantify.

Keep in mind that [Jesus' response to his disciples] is prompted by the

apostles' petition, "*Increase our faith!*"ⁱⁱ

It is an understandable and well-intended request, especially when we

consider what Jesus has just told them:

*"If the same person sins against you seven times a day,
and turns back to you seven times and says,
'I repent,' you must forgive."*ⁱⁱⁱ

In other words, you do not stop offering forgiveness

to the repentant sinner ...

Faced with such a teaching,

who *wouldn't* ask for "more" faith?

Jesus' response suggests that the apostles' request is misguided. He

pivots from the question of quantity to the question of *sufficiency*.

Faith “the size of a mustard seed” is sufficient for even the most

demanding tasks of discipleship.

The mustard seed was known both for its miniscule size ...

and for the contrastingly large, unruly bush that it produced.

It was therefore the perfect metaphor for

small beginnings leading to big results.

But again, the point of Jesus' metaphor ... is not to quantify faith as

much as to affirm its power.

God works through a modicum of faith to empower us to forgive even

the most annoyingly repetitive sinners.

In elaborating on this thought, Jesus introduces a second potentially

problematic metaphor: the slave who works without expectation of

special treatment^{iv}

The pitfall here is the implied association between discipleship and

thankless drudgery:

“Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?”^v

It is one thing to liken the disciple to the servant/slave who serves obeys
a master (a common New Testament metaphor).

But do we have to paint such a dismal picture?

Are obedient disciples really just “*worthless slaves*”^{vi}?

Three observations help to alleviate the gloomy
tenor of this metaphor.

First, it makes more sense to translate the ... phrase as

“unworthy slaves”^{vii}

This shifts the point ...

from the seeming denigration of the disciple
to the nature of discipleship itself.

Obedience to Jesus is not, in and of itself,

something to be rewarded.^{viii}

While the verses in question don’t put it this way,

we could take them as an opportunity

to explain how discipleship

has *its own rewards* (fellowship with God and neighbor).

Second, we should keep in mind that scripture frequently connects
obedience with joy.

Especially when we conceive of obedience as an entering more deeply
into fellowship with God, it is not hard to see how obedience even
fosters joy.^{ix}

In fact, Luke is the preeminent spokesperson for joy in the New
Testament.^x

Luke would be the last person

to equate discipleship with drudgery.

[Luke's gospel is full of references to the joy of the Lord]

Finally, we must bear in mind the previous verses:

the apostles have asked Jesus to “increase our faith”^{xi}

in response to Jesus' extraordinary directive about

forgiveness.^{xii}

Jesus, however, assures them that even a mustard-seed faith

will prove sufficient.^{xiii}

Jesus then offers the slave metaphor

*as a way of situating his forgiveness
directive among the everyday tasks of discipleship.*

What [we] hear as an extraordinary case of discipleship is,

in fact, quite ordinary.

Forgiving the most repetitive (but repentant)

sinner is more extraordinary than

the slave tending the sheep or preparing dinner.

When it's all said and done, then, this passage presents

“faith” ... in terms of our steadfast devotion to Christ—

that is, as *the Christian life itself*.

Numerous passages in Luke present faith ...^{xiv}

but only here with an emphasis on forgiveness...^{xv}

Our ongoing commitment to the practice of forgiveness is,

in other words, a reflection of our own *faithfulness* to Christ.

In a culture enamored by sensationalist news ...

it is easy to question our faith when it does not feel

extraordinary...

But the most mundane act of faith carries extraordinary potential for

transforming the world into the image of its Creator.

I am reminded of the great Catholic saints of the mundane,

André of Montreal (who worked as a monastery porter, sacristan,

and launderer) and

John the Gardener (who assisted his local monastery in gardening

duties, including the altar flowers).

By approaching each ordinary task as an opportunity to live their faith,

they discovered the extraordinary depth of God's love for them

and for the seemingly ordinary (but quite extraordinary!)

people around them.^{xvi}

Amen

ⁱ (verse 6; see also Matthew 17:20; 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-24).

ⁱⁱ (verse 5).

ⁱⁱⁱ (Luke 17:4).

^{iv} (verses 7-10).

^v (verse 9, in which the Greek syntax anticipates a negative answer).

^{vi} (verse 10a)

^{vii} (an equally valid rendering of the Greek adjective *achreios*).

^{viii} (“we have only done what we ought to have done,” verse 10b)

^{ix} (see Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 119:111; 2 Corinthians 1:24; Hebrews 13:17)

^xNumerous Lukan characters rejoice over God’s saving actions in and through the ministry of Jesus. (Luke 1:14; 2:10; 10:17; 13:17; 15:5, 7, 10, 32; 19:6, 37; 24:52; Acts 5:41; 8:39; 11:23; 13:48, 52; 15:3, 31).

^{xi} (verse 5)

^{xii} (verses 3-4). (verse 9, in which the Greek syntax anticipates a negative answer).

^{xiii} (verse 6).

^{xiv} (Greek *pistis* and cognates) in a similar way, often in the context of trials and temptations (Luke 8:12, 25; 12:42, 46; 16:10; 18:8; 19:17; 22:32)

^{xv} (except perhaps Luke 16:10)

^{xvi} Ira Brent Driggers, Professor of New Testament

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https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4200