

Sunday, October 2, 2022 Pentecost 17 ***“Few or Small We Can Change the World”***

Lamentations 3:19-25 Luke 17:5-10

It's autumn and with this change of season, we notice the changes in fall leaf colours as the temperatures rise and fall each day. We are hesitant to turn the heat on in our homes right now because the air conditioner was on just five days ago! But another thing that one might notice is that it is not only leaves that change in appearance but there is also the need for creatures to take shelter or prepare for the cold yet to come. We've seen squirrels scampering all over and on Friday while cleaning in the basement of the house there was a spider and it was huge! It was not a Daddy long legs type but huge and fuzzy and big. In fact, it fit inside the lid of the fabric softener bottle which I used to carry it outside—outside where it belonged. There is just something about spiders and the webs they weave which are both intricate and amazing and also one of my pet peeves. I like to see them outside—not in doorjams or wherever the spider chooses in a house or building. This might go back to one of my favourite books from childhood by E.B. White—“Charlotte's Web”. IF you're not familiar with this story it is about a young pig on a farm whose life purpose was to be fattened and of course you know its fate. But what occurs on the Zuckerman's farm is deemed a miracle. Charlotte a wonderful and lovely spider, a friend to Wilbur the pig saves him from his fate by writing words in her web which describe this adorable pig which is befriended by Fern. Charlotte's web is not only the means by which spiders capture their food, but in the story this spider tells of characteristics of the pig in order to save his life. It is a wonderful story of friendship between spider, pig a little girl and how this little spider changed the fate of Wilbur.

Our reading from Lamentations reflects a community in crisis as the people are in exile and lost. This situation is not something that is isolated for all we need to do is look at the latest news stories and the aftermath of hurricanes Fiona and Ian. Communities of all sizes are affected by outside influences climate, war, diseases and infections and the lack of support. The writer of this passage is discouraged about life and what the future might hold for them. “The thought of it is wormwood and gall” meaning there is so much suffering which is filled with bitterness, resentment, disappointment and humiliation. Wormwood refers to a bitter plant

that is both intoxicating and poisonous; and gall is a substance like liver bile which is green. When Jesus was crucified he was given a concoction of wine vinegar and gall to ease his pain.

The reading continues—“My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me” Here the writer is discouraged, depressed and feeling lost. How many of us can relate to this—now, or having experienced this way in the past two or three years? Of the many things we are learning from the pandemic is that people are experiencing and voicing their concerns of mental health with regard to grief, discouragement, depression and feeling lost. And as the writer laments his thoughts something profound is stated next!

“But this I call to mind” meaning, I remember this and because I remember I have hope! What gives the writer hope? The steadfast love of God never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning: great is God’s faithfulness. Therefore I will have hope in God. Yes this is the basis of the beloved hymn ‘Great is thy faithfulness” and it still reminds me that we need God to guide us no matter what we are trying to do and accomplish as a church family.

Just think for a moment, how often have you desired and wanted to make a difference in someone else’s life and felt disheartened, let down and discouraged? We know that people are hurting in many ways right now- the uncertainty of having the basic necessities of life. Not only because of storms and wars, but because of several factors. Food banks and shelters are in high demand- but the answer is not building more shelters, but finding a solution to the problem as to why people are not able to have a home of their own; why they cannot find work that can sustain them and what the mental health concerns are so that another person can hear and respond with what God offers—hope. The answer to these problems are slow to come with many setbacks and yet when there is some success- hope is restored and then joy will follow.

When reading this passage we must be reassured that God is ever loving, merciful and generous toward us. God is faithful to all people even when we lose our way and forget our need to do what we can no matter whether we are many or few, big or small.

Jesus was teaching his disciples when they boldly asked him to “increase our faith!” His response was “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. Can you imagine what the disciples thought of this? They asked for more faith; and Jesus tells them that the faith they have may be expressed by the size of a mustard seed. But what Jesus means is that even if your faith is small in size, that is still maturing, your faith can still bring about big changes. What he says is that it is not the amount of faith one has that is a measurable quantity but what one does with it that is important.

People are at different levels of faith some people come to know Jesus at an early age, but fall away and return later in life. Their faith journey and level of belief is theirs alone. Other people may come to Christ later in life and pursue growing in relationship because of past experiences. What is essential to people is having a faith- that will sustain you and protect you when one finds themselves in times of grief, discouragement, depression and feeling lost. For this is when your faith will lift you up and support and guide you through the slow process of growing in relationship with God as the Spirit leads.

The apostles lived with Jesus, and they saw him as the Messiah but in Jesus’ words, the disciples have faith but truly need to grow and understand what it means and they will as they continue their journey with Jesus to the cross. But if we have heard the Good News of Jesus life death and resurrection, our faith will continue to grow from within. Our hearts and minds be open to receive His teachings of love. And we will want to respond to help others to live and eventually come to know Him too as the mainstay in our lives.

As a church family we face many ups and downs—celebrations of the birth of children; the death of people at all different ages and the celebrations or rites of passage through life- children, teens young adults and the family years. But what is important that the faith of each person leads to hope and that no matter our age or size we can still do something for another person. We can still strive for peace; we can still share our faith with others and we can see who God is calling us to be. One child grew up and made a difference over 2000 years ago changing the course of human history. And whether we are few in number , whether we are

small or large, young or older we can still change the world. All we need is faith- whether it is the size of a mustard seed or more; faith leads us to change.

Charlotte wrote in her web that Wilbur was “Some pig”. There was no other describing words but these words saved his life. When we think of our faith in God, what words would you use? Deep, strong, growing, searching, unsure, or just some. Jesus says that if you take what faith you have—and use it, you can change the world. You can make trees move into the sea and take root. You can make it happen if you believe in the One who made all things including you. And you can bring about hope where it is needed most by listening, responding and living out your faith in the way of Jesus—by loving others. And you are not alone in doing anything! God is faithful and is with you every step of your journey just believe and have faith!

With our brothers and sisters around the world, we are sharing in the sacrament of Holy Communion this day. As we prepare to do this, let us be reminded why. We are faith filled people who believe in Jesus and are responding to His call to come to the table in remembrance of his mighty act of dying on the cross and rising to new life. As we share this holy meal, we are nourished and fed so that we might continue our faith journey knowing that we have been strengthened by the Spirit. As we share in this holy time, let us be reminded that it is through faith that we believe that Jesus lives again, Earth will breathe again and that we will be fed for the next steps of our journey.

Let us pray.

God we praise you for your faithfulness to us. Help us to use what faith we have to tell others of the joy we experience as Jesus’ disciples. Bless us we pray as we share in this still moment as we seek to change the world to live your way. SILENCE Amen.