

“Would you say, “Sit down and Eat?”

Luke 17: 1-10

As I sat down with this text this week, one of the questions that ran through my mind was, “How in the world do I make a mustard seed relate to the communion Table?” After all, today is World Communion Sunday, the day when hundreds of thousands of people of faith are gathering around God’s Table as a testament to our oneness in Christ, as a testament to our connection as brothers and sisters in love and grace. Today, hundreds of thousands of people of faith are gathering around the Communion Table to partake of the bread of new life and the cup of the new covenant and the image Luke gives us is a mustard seed?

I found myself asking, “Can you even make bread from a mustard seed?” I googled it to just see and turns out you can. Of course you need a whole lots of other stuff mixed in with the mustard seeds but you can make bread out of a tiny mustard seed.

And that is when it hit me. In looking at this text from Luke, I realized I was asking the wrong questions. Instead of asking how can we make two seemingly different things relate, what we should have been asking was “How does the mustard seed, the communion table, the very practices of our faith connect us with the invitation to see the Kingdom of God in our midst? Meaning that in looking at

this text, I realized that I was starting the conversation at the wrong point and in doing so, was totally missing the bigger picture, the bigger picture that cancels out the words “impossible” and “absurd”, the bigger picture that reminds us that we have more than enough faith to live as Jesus’ disciples wherever we go.

Let me explain: In this text from Luke, Jesus gives his disciples four basic faith “rules” for discipleship, 4 basic ways they can live out their faith each and every day as a testament to God’s amazing grace and love which they have already experienced in their lives.

Rule number 1: “Don’t cause or be a stumbling block for anyone. Don’t do anything that causes someone harm or prevents them from being in full relationship with God.” Seems pretty easy. Jesus is basically saying, “Don’t be mean. Don’t purposefully put throw up roadblocks on other people’s journeys of faith. We wouldn’t like it if they did that to us. So don’t do it to other people.”

Rule number 2: Forgive people always. And when in doubt, see the first part on forgiving people again. Okay, I’ll admit this one is a little harder for us, Okay a lot harder for us to live out in our lives. But there it is. Forgive people and if necessary, repeat as many times as needed.

Rule number 3: Faith, even the smallest kernel of faith, is sufficient to experience, to see, to embrace the invitation to partner with God as we work to help bring about the Kingdom of God here on Earth. Now let me stop right there

because this one trips us up every time. I would argue that this one trips us up even more so than the whole forgiving others always part.

Because like the disciples, we tend to quantify our faith. We tend to create a scale that measures our faith, thinking the more we have the better Christians we are. But you see that is not what Jesus is saying here.

“Jesus’ response is not a judgement on the disciples’ absence of faith. Rather, instead, it is an indirect affirmation of their faith. What Jesus is really saying here is, “If you had faith like a mustard seed, and you do, you could say to this sycamore tree, “Go jump into the sea and it would do it.”

When Jesus talks about faith as a mustard seed, Jesus is inviting the disciples to live out and act in the faith that they already have. Because, now this is the part that I want everyone to hear, because even the smallest faith is effective and powerful. Not because of us but because even the smallest kernel of faith puts us in touch with the life giving, life transforming power of our God. Let me say that again: Even the smallest kernel of faith puts us in touch with the life-giving, life-transforming power of our God.

Which brings me back to Rule number 4: We don’t follow God for the rewards. We follow God because our lives have been transformed by the grace and love of God. We follow God because of the joy we receive and the hope that guides us, joy and hope that shine like lights against the darkness, renewing our

hearts, refreshing our souls, always reminding us that this world does not have the last word.

As people of faith, we follow God because we have been named and claimed by our God. Our eyes, our hearts, our very minds have been open to the possibilities of the Kingdom of God in our midst and we realize that need nothing else in order to become the people that God created us and calls us to be. We have more than enough faith to move mountains. We have more than enough faith to bread down walls. We have more than enough faith to tackle any task that this world says is impossible or absurd, tasks like healing the brokenness that divides and separates our world, task like bring reconciliation and hope to all of God's children, tasks like extending the welcome and love of God to all people so that God's love will reign forever and ever more. We can do all these things and more, all because we are connected to the life giving, life transforming power of our God, a power that brought life out of the Chaos, a power that created all of us in God's image, a power that unites us one in the Body of Christ.

Or let me say it another way. This past week, I had the privilege of seeing the Ugandan Children's Choir. It was an amazing experience and I'll be glad to share more about it with you later. But to be honest, it wasn't only through the children's singing that I experienced the Kingdom of God that night. It was also in the connection of laughter between two children, laughter the language of joy and

love, laughter, one of the universal languages that we all speak and has the power to bring people from very different parts of the world together. In that moment, as the children's laughter rang out, it was a connection of spirits, it was a connection of hearts. It was a connection to the bigger picture that invited me to see the Kingdom of God that was in my midst, a connection that helped me realize that I already had more than enough faith to say to the ugliness of the world that God will have the last word.

So here is what happened. During the concert, I had to slip out for a few minutes and little did I know that a child was following me downstairs. This child soon came up beside me and noticed that one of the little girls from Uganda had stumped her toe and was crying. Immediately this little child recognized the pain the little girl was feeling because just a few weeks ago, he had stumped his toe at the exact same point in the church.

He reached out to her, offering her comfort, asking me to go find a band-aid for this little girl. Because after all, for a child, a band-aid fixes everything. So I found one, and even though it wasn't a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle or a Finding Dory band-aid, just a plain simple one, the child realizes that it was more than enough to help stop the pain. So as the adult sponsor began to bandage the little girl's toe up, the other little child knew his next task was to dry her tears. And so a game of peek a boo started between them, curious faces hiding and revealing

themselves, smiles and laughter abounding. Soon the tears were dried and a new friendship made. All because of a plain band-aid, a simple object turned sacred, a simple thing that invited us to make a connection with the Kingdom of God in our midst that night. It was a connection that continued to grow with each simple smile, continued to grow through the gift of laughter. It was a connection that continued to grow through the recognition of mutual pain and joy from healing and love.

That night, I realized it is through the small experiences, the small objects turned sacred that help us make the connection of faith and become the people God created and calls us to be.

Because you see, discipleship has never been about achieving the right amount of faith. It has always been about the possibilities of hope, the possibilities of love, the possibilities of grace that the Kingdom of God inspires in our hearts and in our lives as followers of Jesus Christ.

Faith is not something we do. Faith is something we are. We ARE people of faith. We ARE people of God. We ARE People of the Table. We don't need to do large showy acts that get us recognized or rewarded for doing the very work we are supposed to be doing in the first place. We don't need to do large productions that

start trending on Facebook or Instagram just to conform or approve of the Kingdom Work that we are already doing.

All we need to do is do the work we are called to do: the work of love, the work of grace, the work of bringing healing and wholeness to others, small simple acts that help us make a connection to others, acts like serving a meal, acts like simply listening to someone speak as he or she shares their pain, small simple acts like breaking bread with one another and with others from around the world as a testament to our oneness in Christ.

As people of faith, all we are called to do is to make a connection with others as we live out our faith as Jesus' disciples wherever we are, wherever we go, in whatever we are doing right here and right now. And we have more than enough faith to do just that...

Because if we have faith like a mustard seed, and we do, we can and we will say to this world enough...enough of the hurt, enough of the hate, enough of embracing what divides us rather than embracing what unites us. We have more than enough faith to say to this world let there be reconciliation between all people on Earth, and it will happen. We have more than enough faith to see the Kingdom of God here on Earth as it is in heaven.

This past week in my Theology Tuesday email, I asked everyone how do you live out your faith each and every day so that through our acts of love and grace, we cancel out the words “impossible” and “absurd” from our vocabulary. Since I asked you, I think it is only fair how I try to do this as well.

For me, I live out my faith each and every day based on my understanding of what it means to be People of the Table. This Table that centers us, that anchors us, this Table that takes a small piece of bread and a thimble full of juice and transforms them into a life-giving, life-transforming feast.

For me as a disciple, this Table, this table that holds the bread of new life and the cup of the new covenant, this is how I live out my faith so that the words “Impossible” and “absurd” are canceled out and no longer allowed to be part of my vocabulary. Because you see, what the world sees when it looks at this table are small, insignificant amounts of bread and juice that cannot satisfy anything let alone change the world.

But when I look at this table, when we as people of faith, when we as the people of God, when we look at this table, we see God’s Welcome. We see a place where all are invited to come and partake. We see a feast that not only satisfies the deepest hungers of the soul but also changes hearts, minds, even changes lives. When we look at this table as people of faith, we see a place where all are

embraced as the Beloved Children of God that they already are. As a person of faith, when I look at this Table, it becomes a simple object turned sacred. It becomes a place where we are invited to make a connection to the Kingdom of God that is already in our midst. This Table becomes a place for all of God's children where we are all invited to live out our faith as disciples of Christ and realize that we have more than enough faith to go out and transform the world.

At this Table, we have more than enough faith to do all that because it doesn't take much. All it takes is a smile, a hug, a band-aid, a recognition of mutual pain and suffering to name just a few.. It doesn't take much for us to live out our faith and be the Beloved Children of God that we already are. It doesn't take much to live out our faith as disciples of the one who showed the world that the impossible is always possible through the power of God because we know how the story already ends. We know that God's love will always have the last word.

So in the days to come may we always remember that all it takes is a small kernel of faith, a small piece of bread, a thimble full of juice to create the possibilities of hope that can only be achieved when the Kingdom of God is in our midst. In the days to come, may we always remember that even the smallest act of faith can cancel out the words "impossible" and "absurd" from this world and from our vocabulary. Amen.

