

Mustard seed, or mulberry tree? Oct 5th, 2025

May the words of my mouth and the meditations...

So, in our Gospel passage from Luke, Jesus' disciples had asked him to give them *more* faith.

Faith doesn't happen to come in tiny, medium and jumbo sizes. Faith just "is".

We either have faith – or we don't. Faith is our belief in God and how He moves in our lives. That He is there for us.

Always.

Jesus' response to the disciples showed His exasperation and impatience because they still didn't grasp so much of what he had been attempting to drum into them.

"O, ye of little faith!"

I think we all have used this phrase once or twice – or maybe more – in our lives as a gentle criticism of our friends and loved ones when they doubt us...

I wonder what Jesus' friends thought when He suggested the idea of uprooting a mulberry tree and planting it in the ocean?

Jesus, as he often did, used exaggeration in his lessons...

Yes, a mustard seed is tiny. Not much larger than a sesame seed.

And a mulberry tree, on the other hand, is quite a heavy-duty tree.

My aunt and uncle back in Ohio had one in their back yard, and when I was eleven, I climbed in it with my cousin during our summer vacations.

Its branches were thick and long, its trunk was immense, and its leaves were large, providing great shade from the sun.

In the late spring, it was always loaded with juicy red berries. Steve and I would make pigs of ourselves eating them. Unfortunately, the berry juice also stained my good clothes. Mom wasn't too happy about that!

Mulberry trees can grow to be 60 feet tall, and their canopy spreads up to 40 feet across.

Their root systems are relatively shallow, only a few feet deep, but they spread well over 50 feet in every direction, seeking any available water.

Jesus's suggestion of uprooting such a magnificent tree and transplanting it into the ocean was a ludicrous concept for His disciples. But I'm fairly sure that he got their attention.



Faith. Belief and trust in God, and how he works in our lives. And patience, because God works on His own schedule, not on ours.

Sharon and I have a personal story of faith I want to share.

Our three kids from my first marriage had disappeared out of our lives in 1980 due to circumstances far beyond our control.

For years we prayed long and hard about Mike, Sean and Aimee, and held hard onto our faith that, in God's own time, and if He was so willing, we might at least be able reconnect with them sometime later in their lives.

We had to wait 15 years to be certain that God had heard us.

During those years, we never heard "from" our kids, but we did get rare updates through the grapevine – who happened to be my ex-brother-in-law, Bruce.

Bruce never did buy into what had happened to us.

On Christmas Day of 1995, I got an unexpected call from Bruce. He had just talked with our oldest son, Mike, and Bruce had asked him if he might be interested in reconnecting with us – and Bruce wanted to know if we felt the same.

Mike had told Bruce, "of course!" And we exuberantly agreed, "Yes, please!!".

And so, we finally got to call our son and begin the process of slowly, cautiously getting reacquainted – as adults.

Mike, Sharon and I were thrilled that Bruce had reached out to us and handed us this pathway to getting reunited.

And here is where God's work vividly came into this picture for us.

Exactly four weeks after Bruce had called, opening that door to us getting reconnected with our kids, Bruce passed away of a massive coronary. He had been only 40.

Maybe Bruce took on this act of love because he knew that Mike and his wife were expecting our first grandchild. Maybe Bruce had decided that it was finally time to do what was right, to fix what he believed was wrong.

Time to reach out to those he cherished, and to gift us with a miracle of God's love.

Maybe it was that the Holy Spirit had told Bruce that it was now time for him to act.

We'll never know – but we are all eternally grateful for this blessed gift in our lives.

When Sharon and I moved up to Mount Vernon two years ago, we really didn't want to get involved at Saint Paul's. We

dragged our feet for almost a year. We felt that we didn't want to commit to anything just then.

We felt like we needed a healthy break from formal "church".

God said, "Sure. Take your time. I've got all the time in the world But you don't."

And then, you here at Saint Paul's managed to gently, so innocently, persuade us otherwise.

Your warm inclusion and friendly nudges. The beautiful voices when you sing. Your beautiful smiles and laughs every Sunday.

So many of you have taken ownership of the dozens of tasks that keep the wheels well-oiled here.

Thank you for allowing us to take our time figuring out just where we might fit in at St. Paul's.

So now, together, we find ourselves taking the first steps towards figuring out just what St. Paul and Resurreccion might look like – going forward.

What ministries float our boats? What do we hold near and dear in our hearts? What differences in *other people's* lives do we feel that God is calling us to pursue?

What has worked well in the past – and what, just maybe, we wouldn't miss going forward.

Either we have faith in God – or we don't.

Do we trust God? Or do we not?

God tends to work in the background, so it may feel at times like He has forgotten our dilemma.

Maybe He has placed it on a shelf for safe keeping until the time is right – and we are ready to deal with His answer.

I think He does this so we will carefully take the time to pray on it, to work through just where we, together, want to go from here. What parts will each of us play in it as this unfolds?

And it will all happen, and in God's own time.

It can sometimes be challenging to have faith that God has really heard us. But know that he has.

We need to have faith in Him now, and to believe that He deeply knows what we need here at St. Paul's.

And that mulberry tree? Maybe it can't just be plucked up in an instant, but with faith, patience, some heavy-duty ingenuity, and teamwork, it can be. Believe in this.

We just need to have faith – the size of a mustard seed.

That's all we need.

It's enough.