

Alleluia, alleluia!

The word of the Lord stands for ever:
it is the word given to you, the Good News.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 17:5-10

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

If you had faith!

The Apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' The Lord replied, 'Were your 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.

'Which of you, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, would say to him when he returned from the fields, "Come and have your meal immediately"? Would he not be more likely to say, "Get my supper laid; make yourself tidy and wait on me while I eat and drink. You can eat and drink yourself afterwards"? Must he be grateful to the servant for doing what he was told? So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, "We are merely servants: we have done no more than our duty."'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL



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Reflections on the Gospel



TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / C

06 OCTOBER 2019

FAITH AND GRATEFUL SERVICE

Today's Gospel falls into two distinct parts.

First, the apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith. Jesus' response does not imply that the disciples have no faith. His point seems to be that the little faith they have is enough to work miracles if only they exploited its possibilities to the full.

As so often, Jesus employs everyday images—not without a touch of exaggeration—to drive home the point. On the one hand, a mustard seed is proverbially small. On the other hand, the extensive root system of the mulberry tree makes it notoriously difficult to uproot. Yet a word proceeding from a tiny amount of faith could bring about this effect. It is people of faith who channel God's power into the world.

In the second part of the Gospel we might find off-putting both the image of slavery and, even more, the suggestion that God regards us as 'worthless slaves' who deserve no gratitude whatsoever.

Jesus draws upon an aspect of life familiar to his audience (slavery) without necessarily approving of it. His point is that we should not serve God in the hope of gaining payment or due reward. That would amount to the kind of 'merit' mentality that St Paul, in particular, excluded.

Long before we do any good work ourselves, our faith should make us conscious of the immense benefits we have already received from God. Our Christian service, then, will be an expression of faith and love, motivated by abiding *gratitude* for all God has done for us.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

FIRST READING

Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4

A reading from the prophet Habakkuk

The just will live by faithfulness.

How long, Lord, am I to cry for help
while you will not listen;
to cry 'Oppression!' in your ear
and you will not save?

Why do you set injustice before me,
why do you look on where there is tyranny?
Outrage and violence, this is all I see,
all is contention, and discord flourishes.
Then the Lord answered and said,

'Write the vision down,
inscribe it on tablets
to be easily read,
since this vision is for its own time only:
eager for its own fulfilment, it does not deceive;
if it comes slowly, wait,
for come it will, without fail.

See how he flags, he whose soul is not at rights,
but the upright man will live by his
faithfulness.'

■ The word of the Lord.

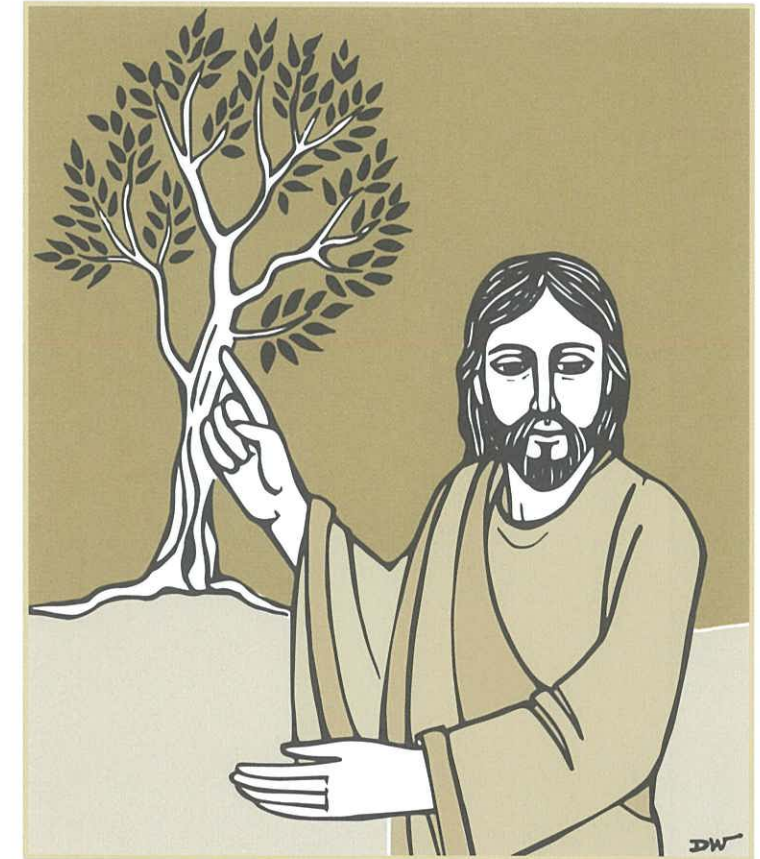
RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 94:1-2, 6-9. R. v. 8

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord; / hail the rock who saves us. / Let us come before him, giving thanks, / with songs let us hail the Lord. **R.**

2. Come in; let us bow and bend low; / let us kneel before the God who made us / for he is our God and we / the people who belong to his pasture, / the flock that is led by his hand. **R.**

3. O that today you would listen to his voice! / 'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, / as on that day at Massah in the desert / when your fathers put me to the test; / when they tried me, though they saw my work.' **R.**



SECOND READING

2 Tim 1:6-8, 13-14

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to Timothy

Never be ashamed of witnessing to the Lord.

I am reminding you to fan into a flame the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you. God's gift was not a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control. So you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to the Lord, or ashamed of me for being his prisoner; but with me, bear the hardships for the sake of the Good News, relying on the power of God.

Keep as your pattern the sound teaching you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. You have been trusted to look after something precious; guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

■ The word of the Lord.