



Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (C)
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
October 6, 2019
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

†In the Name of God, Creator, Redeemer and Comforter. Amen.

Ever cried out to God, “Increase my faith?” Can we identify with the apostles especially if their plea to Jesus was as sincere as I think it might have been? Just imagine that they had left everything to follow Jesus!

Jesus went about Galilee handpicking individuals who left their livelihoods to follow him. What would we have done?

Would we have left our homes, families and work, abandoned all, and followed Jesus? Once having done that and having encountered challenge after challenge, would we have joined the apostolic chorus and cried out, “Increase our faith?”

We find the word, “faith”, in all three readings today. That’s somewhat unusual in the lectionary cycle. Maybe, God is trying to tell us something about ‘faith’. Do you think? I think, ‘yes’.

The Prophet Habakkuk tells us that “the righteous live by their faith.” Paul tells us, “I am reminded of your sincere faith” as passed down from your ancestors. The Gospel says, “Increase our faith”.

Jesus says that what may seem a little faith can have a significant impact. He also says that to follow is to follow with a mindset of commitment that should be as encompassing as possible. He encourages the apostles and us to go the extra mile in serving God and God’s people. As Christians, we can only do that through hearts filled with the love of Jesus.

St. Francis of Assisi had a heart filled with the love of Jesus. In the early 1200’s, his story is a compelling one in the small Italian town of Assisi. There, his faith moved him to commit his life to God in Jesus. There, he communed with God especially in nature and in God’s creatures ‘great and small’. In his honor, we will shortly bless animals, those pets in our lives, who depend on humans for everything and who return a kind of affection that some say is “unconditional”.

If we are not moved by the faith of the Hebrew Prophets, St. Paul, the apostles or St. Francis of Assisi, then, perhaps we can be moved by the faith of the generations of parishioners at St. Mark’s. This month, we celebrate the faith which has sustained this parish for 183 years. The determined founders of St. Mark’s in 1836 had faith that St. Mark’s would be a beacon of light for the small trading and fishing village then known as Kent.

From that early faith sprung a tradition of commitment to God and God’s people that has endured these many years. This beautiful historic church is a testament to that faith and the faith of the subsequent generations who have followed the original founders. People have prayed in this building since 1846, and “shining our light” is as important today as it was then.

Throughout the Parish's history, faith has enabled ministries which have nurtured parishioners and visitors of all ages. Ministries assured them and assure us of God's love and commitment to us. In turn, we are invited into a relationship with God in Jesus. If sincerely pursued, that relationship can increase our faith.

There are times in life when we need a strong faith. There are times in life, dark times in life, times of challenge and discernment, when even a strong faith is tested. I can attest to that fact, and perhaps, you can as well.

If you are in any kind of turmoil today, then, have faith that Jesus is with you. Find the courage to invite Jesus in to that turmoil and rest assured that he will be there.

The times in which we find ourselves are difficult times at the national level and elsewhere. Society is changing. People's attitudes and demeanors are changing. The pursuit of truth seems on the verge of collapse, and yet, people of faith are encouraged to trudge on.

People of faith pray that their faith will be strong and will endure the tests of life. Faith brings us closer to Jesus and brings us into an intimate and fulfilling relationship so desired by God and so needed by each of us.

The mission to which we are called and continue to embrace at St. Mark's is nurtured and sustained through prayer. We are nurtured and sustained through being here as often as possible in worship and to pledging ourselves and our financial resources for God's mission, God's work at St. Mark's. Doing God's work brings life to us and all those whom we serve, and our faith is the stronger for it.

Today, we can give God thanks for the faith of those who have gone before us and also those sitting in the pew next to us. We can give God thanks for the many gifts we continue to be given, our faith, our families and friends, our pets and yes, the resources we have been given so that we can in turn share them with others.

Thank you for being here to be nourished and fed. Together, we do the best we can to be faithful witnesses to the call to follow Jesus. That call is nourished through the power of the Holy Spirit. St. Mark's works hard to nourish all those who gather here in God's Name.

Jesus tells us: "Come, follow me, and I will give you rest". (Matthew 11:28) So, it is. So, it will be. So, we give thanks. Amen.