

Sunday 5 October 2025
[Long Weekend]

Lamentations 3.19-26 [7.30am only]

2 Timothy 1.1-14

Luke 17.5-10

Nic Denny-Dimitriou, St David's, Chelmer

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**Luke 17.5-10**

<sup>5</sup>The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" <sup>6</sup>The Lord replied, "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.

<sup>7</sup>"Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? <sup>8</sup>Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me; put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? <sup>9</sup>Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? <sup>10</sup>So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!' "

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YouTube Video Transcript:

Abp Jeremy Greaves – "Sunday is Coming" – 5 Oct 2025

In Luke 17:5-10, the disciples ask Jesus to increase our faith. Jesus responds with the startling image of faith as small as a mustard seed, tiny but capable of uprooting a mulberry tree.

Then he shifts to a parable about servants who simply do what is required of them.

Dominic Crossan reminds us that Jesus often turns our expectations upside down. Faith is not about quantity, piling up more and more belief, but about trust expressed in action.

The passage perhaps suggests that the smallest acts of justice, mercy, and love are never insignificant. The kingdom of God takes root not in grand

displays but in mustard seed moments where courage, compassion, and persistence quietly transform the world.

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## Sermon Notes

As a young person I disliked sauces on foods. With distaste – a good word in this instance – I would watch my Irish grandfather add a dollop of French Dijon mustard to Sunday's roast meat and vegetables.

I recall my father, a Greek from Alexandria, Egypt, who loved the magnificent flavours of herbs and spices of eastern Mediterranean cooking, telling us how as an Engineering student in Glasgow, Scotland, the overcooked bland food was only made bearable for him by adding mustard.

I still seldom add sauce to my food, and in my kitchen, aside from plenty of herbs, the only sauce you will find is chocolate.

I always assumed mustard must be a French or British thing, but since Jesus refers to their seeds as if it is common, perhaps the earliest culinary use of it was in the eastern Mediterranean, including Palestine. Of course, Jesus was not referring to people's choices of flavouring foods, but my thoughts wandered into memory zones just thinking about Jesus' comment.

Jeremy's commentary, like most commentators, emphasises what Jesus also emphasised: the tiny size of the seed, as a metaphor for faith.

That's followed by the point that faith has more to do with action than being mainly about intellectual belief. In that case, the natural follow-on is the suggestion that what may seem to us to be small acts of justice, mercy and love are important. As actions that flow from our faith, all such acts are significant, and none are insignificant.

Grand displays are not the only way, nor the chief way, in which God's kingdom is made known, since even seemingly small 'mustard seed moments' of courage, compassion, and persistence can transform the world.

My earlier comments about mustard, going beyond Jesus' comments about the seed but talking here about the flavourful condiment, may stretch a point too far, but I'd like to elaborate on the relevance.

We note that even a small amount of strong-tasting mustard gives a full flavour to a meal, whether you regard it as enhancing a delicious meal, or like my father in post-war Scotland, using mustard to enable him to eat otherwise tasteless over-boiled food.

The point is this: a small amount infused in the rest of the meal makes a significant and positive difference, it flavours the whole meal.

Equally, therefore, a seemingly small act of unkindness, or injustice, or other hurtful action towards someone, can also have a hugely negative effect far beyond the act itself.

This is going further than Jesus' original comment, but was my way of further thinking about the emphasis on faith and action.

I wonder what thoughts you may have about small acts of compassion, of faith in action, of showing care or acting on something with integrity and courage because of your faith...

I wonder too what thoughts you may have about small acts of unkindness, of injustice, of failure to show care or failure to act with integrity and courage despite your faith...

We all experience these from others.  
We all do these to others, too.

*[30 second pause for reflection]*

This reminds me of what we spoke of last Sunday, from Jesus' story of Lazarus and the rich man who ignored Lazarus, who didn't even notice him. I spoke about how we sometimes avert our gaze from things we don't want to see for fear that we might then need to respond; and in closing, I quoted the famous words of Hebrew prophet Micah, who elaborated what God required from us:

To do justice, to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6.8

The phrase, "to **do** justice" stands out for me. Justice is not about feelings, it is about what we do, and is enacted in how I choose to live, and in the values expressed by a whole society and all its many 'parts'.

I reminded us of the thoughtful words of a famous Jewish rabbi, Tarfon, acknowledging that we might feel overwhelmed by what is expected of us in fulfilling God's laws and all the needs around us:

You are not obligated to complete the work.

But neither are you free to abandon it. [Brief elaboration]

Rabbi Tarfon: Pirkei Avot, via the Mishnah, re Micah 6.8 /  
Tikkun Olam, told to us at St David's by Prof. David Bonninger.

It is not helpful to feel ourselves "small" because we think our faith is little, or weak, or not big enough – however and whomever may arbitrarily decide what is enough. Faith is not about quantity, or bigness.

You are here today because you have faith, and the gift of God is within you. Nothing you do makes God love you more, nothing you do makes God love you less. By the grace of God, even a tiny amount of faith is enough, Jesus said.

It is still worth asking ourselves: "Are we living faithfully with the faith we have?"

Jesus' almost sarcastic comments about the servant suggest that just as servants didn't expect to be thanked simply for doing what was expected of them, so too, living faithfully is what's expected of us and we shouldn't expect to be especially praised for simply living as believers.

Our basic faithfulness and integrity should be assumed. It's what we were created for, what we are called to do and be; it's doing our job.

As Paul wrote to Timothy, "For this reason I remind you to rekindle / fan into flame / stir up the gift of God that is within you."

Richard Rohr writes that one of God's greatest gifts to you is you, and I would add: you with God's gracious gift of faith in you – a gift that is sometimes surprising, sometimes challenging, but always wonderful.

I conclude with a quote from Christian writer and poet Madeleine L'Engle:

Slowly I have realised that I do not have to be qualified to do what I am asked to do. That I just have to go ahead and do it, even though I can't do it as well as I think it ought to be done. This is one of the most liberating lessons of my life.

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