

St James' Church, Weybridge

Trinity 16, proper 22 – 5th October 2025

Introduction and Call to Worship

We are called to faith in the loving God, creator of the world. We are called to faith in Jesus Christ, who shows us how to live. We are called to faith in the Holy Spirit, who sustains us in that faith.

Today's Readings

First Reading Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Faithfulness to God and patient waiting through difficult times will result in fullness of life for the righteous.

Gospel Luke 17:5-10

Jesus challenges the apostles to have faith and follow his commandments.

HOMILY

"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." (Luke 17:6)

There was an accident, and a man is left hanging by a branch above a ravine and looks down then back up and says, "if there is anyone up there tell me what to do, give me faith." A booming voice from above responds, "if you have faith, then let go." The man looks down into the ravine, then back up again and says, "is there anyone else up there?"

Do you ever worry that you lack faith? Perhaps there has been an occasion in your life when you have found your faith is tested, or you look at things going on in the world and question your faith? Perhaps you have asked, where is God, during your daily life and activities? And how do you find God in the fullness of everyday life? I'm sure all of us can think of a time we have felt like this, so perhaps it is reassuring for us, that those closest to Jesus have questions too.

Faith is connecting with the God who holds all things together, who loves and knows each and every one of us. Faith is found in our joys and cares, in our challenges and conflicts, in our struggles, hopes and fears, as we lean into God's presence and guidance. Faith informs our thinking and our actions as Christians, as we discern how God might be using us in his work, today. Faith is a living ongoing encounter with God. Faith is our everyday existence with the God who holds all things together.

Today's Gospel tells us how the disciples ask Jesus for more faith - it's all so difficult. It's not that they lack faith in the first place, rather they need more. Our Lord's response implies that he agrees that they do need more – we all do. In Matthew's Gospel we read that *"Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible!'"* While human understanding may struggle, divine possibilities are limitless. Perhaps it has ever been thus? Let's look back to the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk.

He is battling, in much the same way as poor Job and the writer of Psalm 73 – that while God's people suffer, it seems the wicked go free. His prophecy belongs to the latter part of the 7th century BC, around the time Jeremiah was in Jerusalem, although some scholars would suggest it is before, and

certainly before Jerusalem was destroyed in 587. Habakkuk, a man of deep faith, questions God at the start of Chapter 1; *“O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen?”* (1: 2) Habakkuk speaks God’s words in response to his cry, found in the following chapter, *“the righteous live by their faith.”* (2:4) The prophet goes on to proclaim that remaining faithful to and trusting God leads to life.

It is worth pausing a moment to think about faith. In church-speak it most often means what we believe – the Creed is often introduced with the words: *“Let us stand to declare our faith”* – and includes the words, *we believe and trust...* and that is part of it. Maybe the disciples require further guidance to develop trust and grow their faith.

In response, our Lord, in story form paints a word-picture to express the power of faith; *“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.”* (Luke 17: 6) In other words, trust in God first, then you can overcome any challenges. And a little faith goes a long way.

Now I can’t say for certain, that if I was hanging from a branch, dangling over a ravine, that I would have the faith just to let go – even if a powerful voice told me to! But I do have faith in the promises of Jesus that I am loved, valued and saved, for he calls us, his disciples today, to live in faith and trust. Our everyday faith really matters to God who loves us, and it should matter to us too, but it requires work on our part, as his first disciples discovered. We should start with prayer and thankfulness, for the blessings we have already received. From there we must tend our faith, look after and nurture it.

To help us, the Church of England has developed resources entitled, *‘Everyday faith.’* Whether you wish to develop your faith or support others in theirs, Everyday Faith is designed to support you in your life discipleship or vocational journey. You can find a link to Everyday Faith on our website, and there are copies of the Everyday Faith leaflet at the back of Church.

If you are good with technology, using the Everyday Faith App could help. Another wonderful way forward is to join one of our small groups, sharing with other Christians through prayer and simple bible study. Regular worship here at St James’ is an important part of that nurturing, as is participating in one of our courses, to help expand our horizons. And there is much more too we can do.

Like those first disciples, we may well ask of Jesus, please *‘Increase our faith!’* Trust that prayer to the Lord who knows you and loves you, and through the church, offers you opportunities to grow in faith, in trust and in love. Amen.

Father Damian Harrison-Miles, October 2025.