

## St. Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor — 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost

Revd Rob Lamerton

*Lamentations 1.1-6; Canticle: Lamentations 3.19-26; 2 Timothy 1.1-14; Luke 17.5-10*

The themes of faith and faithfulness to God have been popping up in various ways over the past few weeks.

Two weeks ago, we read about the dishonest manager, whose presence of mind and shrewdness were used by Jesus to remind his followers that they needed to use such skills in the service of God and about faithfulness in small things as well as great.

Jesus also spoke about the continuing importance of the law, about marriage and divorce, about the rich and poor, and about faithfulness to the law and the prophets. In the passage just before today's reading, Jesus pointed out the gravity of leading others into sin and spoke of forgiveness "seven times a day".

Jesus had given many challenges about being disciples. It is only natural that the apostles who had been challenged with such responsibility should seek to increase their faith! So they came to Jesus and said, "Increase our faith!" They reckoned that to do everything Jesus was asking of them would need more faith.

But Jesus' answer was that if they had faith as small as a mustard seed they could do much. If we wait until we think we have enough faith, we will never act. Even a little faith will move a large object. The issue is not the *amount* of faith. Rather it's about how we use it!

The surprise is that by taking action with a small amount of faith, we deepen and strengthen our faith. If all we need is faith as small or as large as a mustard seed, then the demands of discipleship are not beyond anyone. We have enough faith!

In the second part of the story, Jesus shows what the faithful disciple looks like. The servant has been labouring all day in the field, but there is more to be done. There is always more to be done! The work of faith, the work of the disciple, is never completed. It is ongoing.

Now I am sure that Jesus would not want us to use this story as an argument for overwork or for lack of rest and recreation. In this case, he tells the story to describe faith and discipleship as active and ongoing.

Day by day, there are demands on our faith but we can be willing to act even with a small faith and to see the call of faith as ongoing. The question for me is, "What am I failing to act upon because I think my faith is limited?" Where do I need to be more active and to step out in faith?

Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to be asked to think about what faith, action, and discipleship mean for St Philip's, as we think about our resources — faith resources, human resources, and practical financial resources. The purpose of focusing on these things is to get us to think about:

- how we will approach the ministry needs of the future, and

- how, as we think about the future, can we fund what we do, or
- whether we want to radically change the way we do things.

Two things come to mind:

- the possibility of a paid person to resource and teach children's ministry; and
- the present funding crisis for the Northbourne Community Centre and its Monday program.

I'm not suggesting we as a Parish provide the money for both, but a requirement of our faith is that we find ways to act in response. Already we have taken some action to redress the failure to attract further funds for Northbourne. For the children's ministry, it would be good if we could pray and think about the way ahead. All options are open. Offer ideas! Don't think your idea is a silly just because they haven't been done before!

Jeremiah lamented the failure to act appropriately to save his people at Jerusalem. They had had warning of the situation, but poor leadership and unwillingness to change led to their destruction.

Paul commends Timothy for his faith, a faith that had been passed from Timothy's grandmother to his mother and then to Timothy. Paul encourages Timothy to guard the good treasure of his faith that had been entrusted to him with the help of the Holy Spirit. I take that to mean that Timothy, and ourselves as disciples, should learn to pray and to act even with what seems to be a small mustard seed of faith. We can take heart from the words of today's canticle:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning (Lamentations 3.22-23)

Every day, as the sun rises on a new dawn, we have the opportunity to respond to God's call, to act in faith.