

This Big

From the Bible: Luke 17: 5-6

The Rev. Dr. Paul D. Alcorn
Bedford Presbyterian Church
Bedford, NY
July 11, 2010

“If your faith was even this big...” Jesus said.

Every time I read something like this from the Bible I find myself asking: what’s going on here? What happened earlier in the day or earlier in the week that led Jesus to say something like that to his disciples? Could it be that after months of teaching and leading and coaching and encouraging... Trying to get the disciples to “step up to the plate” rather than to step back and leave it to him that Jesus had enough.

“What if I can’t do it?” The disciples said to Jesus and each other.

- What if I fail?
- The problem is too big.
- I wish I could, but...

And, if it is true, like I think it is, that the Bible is as much about us as it is about them, then all too easily we join the murmuring and add our own excuses.

- I am too tired.
- I am too busy.
- It probably won’t make that much of a difference.
- I don’t know enough about the Bible.

I can imagine Jesus listening to all of this day in and day out...

Until one day he turns around...

Stopping them in their tracks and us in mid-sentence and says...

“If you only had faith this big.”

Last week, 21 of us were in Buchanan County, VA on our annual summer work trip. We rebuilt and reshingled two roofs and rebuilt two porches. And, in addition to the work we did during the day, each evening we gathered in the sanctuary of the Buchanan First Presbyterian Church where we were staying, to talk with each other about what we were experiencing and what we were learning. The springboard for our discussions each evening was a “Quote of the Day” selected by one or two of the high school students on the trip. The quote selected for one of the days was a quote by Gandhi and compliments, I think, the verse from the Bible about faith the size of a mustard seed. The quote goes like this: *“Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.”*

I can’t remember all of what was said in our discussion that evening, but the one part that I do remember is a comment made by one of the high school students about the all of the roofing nails we were using. Each nail in and of itself is insignificant. Put in one after another from about 9:00 in the morning until about 4:00 in the afternoon. Four nails per shingle. Each nail insignificant...until, that is, at the end of the week when two homes had new roofs that no longer leaked when it rained. *Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.*

I wonder if that is what it is like for you and me.

I wonder if that is what God asks of you and me.

Nail after nail.

Day after day.

Moment by moment.

Taking our faith – whatever size it happens to be on any particular day...

Even when it is only this big...

And doing our best...

- To make a positive difference in some way.
- To make the world better in some way.
- To spend our money thoughtfully in a way that matches our best values and our deepest hopes.
- To treat others respectfully the way that we would like to be treated.
- To pay attention to those around us.
- To practice compassion when the situation calls for it.
- To live with a sense of gratitude near the center of our lives.

You get the idea.

Maybe that is when and how mountains get moved and bushes uprooted and roofs get built and lives get changed and hope becomes embodied and God comes close.

Maybe.

So, what can God do with you?

Today?

Tomorrow?

Even with all your questions and all your doubts and all your uncertainty.

Even with your busy schedule and multiple commitments.

Even if you think your faith is only this big.