

## Proper 22

*Sunday between 2 and 8 October inclusive · Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time*

### Principal Service readings

Habakkuk 1.1-4; 2.1-4	Lawlessness prevails, but the upright will live by faithfulness
Psalms 37.1-9	The fate of the upright and the wicked
2 Timothy 1.1-14	The gift of God's Spirit, perseverance and trust
Luke 17.5-10	The power of faith, and humble service

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *The power of faith, and humble service*

<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 ploughing 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!"

Luke 17.5-10 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

### Comments and Questions

The disciples' request to Jesus to 'increase our faith' (17.5) comes in response to what they hear in 17.1-4, to do with sin and its consequences

<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

(17.1-2), and the challenges of forgiveness (17.3-4). The point is that the behaviour of the disciples should be consonant with their convictions. In Matthew the the parallel saying (Matthew 17.20) comes after the disciples fail to exorcise the possessed (Matthew 17.14-18).

The mustard seed is mentioned for its smallness (17.6). It is implied that the disciples don't even have this much faith, and so wouldn't be able to move a mulberry tree (cf. Matthew 17.20; 21.21; Mark 11.22-23).

Luke favours the domestic analogy of the master/slave relationship to illustrate his point (cf. 12.35-40, 42-48; 13.25-27; 14.16-24; 16.1-13). The parable is unique to Luke. The point is not about good manners, but about social obligation and expectation. The slave understands that his time belongs to his master. Even after a period of obedient service, there is no ground for boasting (Romans 3.27), no period of fulfilled duty beyond which merits begin to accumulate. Jesus came among us one who serves, and so his followers are also servants.

## Quotations

### 1

True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.

*The purpose driven life: what on earth am I here for? / Rick Warren. 2002*

### 2

These are a few ways we can practice humility:

To speak as little as possible of one's self.

To mind one's own business.

Not to want to manage other people's affairs.

To avoid curiosity.

To accept contradictions and correction cheerfully.

To pass over the mistakes of others.

To accept insults and injuries.

To accept being slighted, forgotten and disliked.

To be kind and gentle even under provocation.

Never to stand on one's dignity.

To choose always the hardest.

*The joy in loving: a guide to daily living / Mother Teresa of Calcutta. 1997*

## 3

In a very real sense not one of us is qualified, but it seems that God continually chooses the most unqualified to do his work, to bear his glory. If we are qualified, we tend to think that we have done the job ourselves. If we are forced to accept our evident lack of qualification, then there's no danger that we will confuse God's work with our own, or God's glory with our own.

*Walking on water: reflections on faith and art / Madeleine L'Engle. 1980*

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Faith; kingdom of God; discipleship; Christian witness

## Closing Prayer

Amid this world's violence and destruction  
and having but a little faith,  
we come to you, God our refuge.  
Allow us to share your vision  
and grant us the patience to await its allotted time.  
Make us trust in your prevailing will  
that we may commit our destiny to you,  
be confident in our witness to your truth,  
and faithful in our task of service.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Celebrating the Christian Year · Proper 22, Year C<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.*