

Faith as a grain of mustard seed

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

Many readers have been actively striving to practice their religion for many years. You are a sincere student of the Bible. You have wonderful proofs of God's presence and loving care. Perhaps you are practicing Christian healing for family and friends. You are earning God's blessing, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matthew 25:21)

This very success gives us a desire for more progress. Perhaps there is a stubborn problem in our family, our church, our community, or a physical condition to be healed. Perhaps we want to feel a sense of purpose. We want fresh inspiration, a deeper conviction of the presence and power of God. We want to improve our demonstration of Christianity in quality and quantity.

The disciples desired this improvement. They asked Jesus, "Lord, increase our faith." (Luke 17:50) They had already been following Jesus. They wanted to be more effective Christians and healers. Jesus told them how to do this.

He said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." (Luke 17:6) Why did Jesus use the analogy of a mustard seed? If he wanted to say we only needed a little faith, he could have said a grain of sand. There was plenty of sand available.

But Jesus was referring to quality and not quantity. A mustard seed includes all the qualities necessary for rapid and strong growth. When planted in good soil a mustard seed grows extraordinarily fast reaching a tree like height of 10 to 15 feet. So Jesus was teaching his followers that although their faith might seem small in the beginning, if nurtured and developed it would grow to great heights.

How can we nurture our faith in the power of God? First by planting our faith in good soil or a human consciousness rich in morality, strong in willingness to put God first. It is the willingness to practice our Christianity that strengthens us. It is growth of the spirit more than knowledge of the letter. An intellectual or scholastic approach to Christianity is the planting of a seed in stony ground. The hardness of human ego prevents the seed of faith from surviving. Unwillingness to conform to God's moral requirements are like weeds springing up to choke out the good seed. Not protecting the seed of faith from the busyness of daily life is like allowing the birds to peck at the seeds of faith before they have an opportunity to germinate.

Good soil is characterized by richness in honesty, humility, love. Willing to weed out anger, self-justification, fear - the seed of faith has room to grow. Watered by unselfish desire to do good, warmed by the sunshine of loving affection, faith grows.

Strong faith is the power of God reflected in human experience. No matter how rooted a problem seems to be, the power of God can and will remove it. And remove it completely. Casting a tree into the sea is symbolic of destroying it so that it cannot take root and grow again. This is the effect of the power of God. Let us nurture and protect our faith in God so that our conviction in good grows in strength and expression like a mustard plant.

Published in: *Gallatin News Examiner November 15, 1996*
Nashville Metropolitan Times November 20, 1996