

Last week I mentioned a story where a minister told of her young people who all felt inadequate to their calling as Christians. I believe that they are not alone. Most of us have an inferiority complex when it comes to our faith and our place in the church.

Many times over the years, I have experienced very capable people turn down requests to take a leadership role, not because they did not have the skill or the time or the passion but rather by letting their inferiority complex speak up, "I could never do that." On the other hand I have also seen people take on new challenges and in doing so end up flourishing in a totally unexpected area. Sometimes – life is found when we find the courage to say yes when our first instinct is to say no.

But lest anyone should get discouraged, we should not forget that the Biblical record is full of stories where people felt that they were inadequate or unqualified for the task at hand. The disciples are a prime example. Over and over again the disciples are called to have just a little faith. During the training of the disciples Jesus ask them to do some fairly extraordinary things – to give away their possessions, to forgive those who wrong them...not once but countless times, to take up his cross, and more. No wonder then, they constantly ask for more faith. They feel inadequate to the task before them, insufficient to the challenges, unable to imagine accomplishing any of what he is asking.

And all of us I suspect feel the same way. Like we need a little more faith...just to get through, let alone to make a difference. But as we follow the story we might expect Jesus to recognize their need welcome their request and instruct them as to how to strengthen their muscles of faith. But he doesn't. Instead, he says. You are salt – you are light - "If you had even a speck of faith..." He implies that they actually don't have faith even the size of a mustard seed. What kind of response is that? To the disciples' earnest, even heartfelt question?

Maybe then Jesus' sharp retort was just what they needed – maybe just what we need – to orient them and us to the incredible presence of God all around them and us and the totally-sufficient faith they and we already have.

Over and over again Jesus uses the example of the steward the household manager as that of the Christian a servant and servants in his day and time were expected to simply do their job. That's more what faith is like, Jesus seems to say – simply the willingness to do what needs to be done. Faith is not, in other words, some kind of scarce resource that needs to be saved, stored up, added to, saved for a rainy day.

Moreover, faith isn't always heroic. Indeed, it usually isn't, but instead it is simply and humbly doing what needs to be done, big or small, great or mundane, just because it needs doing.

This isn't the first time Jesus has hinted at this. Jesus named as faithful a woman's desperate confidence that if she only touches him he will be healed (3:48), and a centurion's concern for a sick servant (7:9), also a woman's gratitude at being forgiven (7:50). And he also calls faithful a Samaritan leper who returns to thank him for healing (17:19) and a blind beggar who asks to be healed (18:42).

And so it perhaps shouldn't surprise us that Jesus challenges the disciples' perception about faith by pointing them to the far from illustrious or noteworthy hard work and service of a servant performing their duties.

Faith is found not in the mighty acts of heaven but in the ordinary and everyday acts of doing what needs to be done, responding to the needs around us, and caring for the people who come our way.

Over and over again Jesus calls the seemingly inconsequential the unnoticed things ordinary people do day by day as examples of faith faithful?

- Showing up for work and doing a good job.
- Listening when someone needs to talk.
- Bending down and saying hi to a child at their level.
- Greeting people at the door.
- Helping newcomers find their way around
- Volunteering at a local Bread of Life meal night
- Serving coffee and tea
- Sorting the recycle
- Balancing the books
- Singing in the choir
- Writing a note to someone who has done a kindness.
- Praying for a neighbor who is having a hard time.

The list could go on. And that's the point. None of these is any big deal, and yet it is just these kinds of acts that occupy so much of our lives. And how many of us think of these simple things as acts of faith. Somehow, an "act of faith" seems like it needs to be significant or costly or even extravagant to merit God's attention. And that misperception isn't really new.

Martin Luther, yes the same Martin Luther who began the Reformation 500 years ago, once wrote of the virtue of a father changing diapers (emphasizing father because that was so extremely rare, and probably considered unbecoming, at the time): "When a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other menial task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool,...God with all his angels and creatures is smiling" (LW:45:50).

Look, when we read the headlines and see news of injustice and war, it can seem like there is no hope. Yet all around us signs of hope – of God continuing to love and care

for this world through the simple, ordinary, even mundane work of everyday life – Jesus calls them acts of faith