

Mustard Seed Faith

TEXT : Matt 21:18 - 21

¹⁸ Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. ¹⁹ Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.

²⁰ When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.

²¹ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done.

1. THE NATURE OF FAITH

Discipleship Center : In 1992, 2 men, Alfred Wetindi and Andreus Ruh, felt the Lord calling them to begin a discipleship ministry in the slums of Nairobi. Alfred, with Andreus' support, therefore moved his family into the slum and begin evangelism. Within 2 years over 30 young men had been led to Christ, and discipled. To date 4 little churches have been planted in the slum thru this dream. **Alfred planted his dream and God rewarded his faith.**

Tumaini Clinic : In 1995 Max Collison approached the elders with a vision to start a self-sustaining clinic in the Korogocho slum. The elders encouraged him to follow his dream, and surrounded him with a team of solid men & women to help him. Last year that clinic, which now has 3 wonderful, dedicated nurses, served over 12,000 slum dwellers, and has been such a powerful ministry that people even come from as far as Thika and Machakos

to seek medical care at it. **Max planted his dream and God rewarded his faith.**

Huruma Children's Home : In 1990, Mama Ziporah was taken very ill. In praying for healing, she had a burden to provide shelter in her home to destitute children, and promised God that if she was granted healing, she would open her home to 2 – 3 children. Today she has 46 otherwise destitute children living in her home, all adopted and treated like her own 3 children. We have often helped this home and several of you here have served on it's governing board. **Mama Ziporah planted her dream and God rewarded her faith.**

R.O.P.E.S. : In 1996 Muhia Karianjahi, who had been a Mountain Guide at the time he accepted Christ as his savior, felt a burden to use his outdoor experience to help mould character in young people. He approached the elders for assistance and the elders agreed to pay his salary for 5 years if he would commit himself to birth this vision. He did, and has now began the ROPES ministry that you all are aware of. **Muhia planted his dream and God is rewarding him with growth.**

Each of these people exercised faith in the fulfillment of their dream. What sort of faith? Well let me explain to you the nature of faith. There are 2 types of faith.

Sustaining Faith: Firstly, there is what I call "Sustaining Faith". Sustaining faith is the faith we each express on a daily basis as we trust the Lord for sustenance. Every time we ask for safety, for good health, for food on the table to eat we are expressing faith in a God who has promised to care for us. Many of us receive a pay cheque at the end of the month. We don't often think of such salary as a matter of faith because we know we will get it, but we do recognize that it is God goodness that granted us the job in the

first place, and that he is the one that gives us strength and wisdom to hold that job . . . and so, even though we don't often see our salary as a matter of faith, it is. Most of us express faith in this way repeated number of times in a day; many times we don't even think about it until evening or bedtime when we remember to thank God for watching over us that day. This is sustaining faith, and it is a good thing.

Mustard Seed Faith : But there is another kind of faith, it is what I call "mustard seed faith". The bible tells us 2 things about the mustard seed . . .

Matt 13:31 *He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."*

first is it's ability, even though it is the smallest of seeds, to grow into a huge shrub, or tree as the bible calls it, and provide shelter, shade and refreshment to so many, the birds in this case.

The second is that if we have faith, even as small as a mustard seed, we can never-the-less accomplish much with it

Matt 17:20 *He replied, ". . . I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

What is Mustard seed faith? It is faith that moves mountains; it is faith that believes God for the impossible and accomplishes the impossible. Mustard seed faith is that faith, unlike sustaining faith, that does not depend on my own abilities, strength, resources or contacts to accomplish great things. Mustard seed faith is that faith

that **BEGINS**, where my strength and ability ends. It is that faith that ushers me into the purposes of God that are bigger than me, and that cannot be accomplished **UNLESS** God pours out his power and might miraculously on my behalf. Mustard seed faith prays what are called "impossible prayers", prayers that cannot be answered, prayers that are so huge and so obviously impossible, that there is **NO HOPE** of answering them **UNLESS** God does it. This is mustard seed faith.

The sad thing is that though this is such powerful, mountain moving faith, **NOT MANY** Christians express it!

2. UNDER-CHALLENGING GOD : Let me ask you, What impossible prayers are you praying right now? When was the last time you really stretched your faith. For those of you who are missionaries here, you remember the time you first said yes to missions and began support-raising, can you remember the excitement, the fear and yet the assurance that God would come thru for you? That was mustard seed faith – you were stepping out in faith. But now things have settled down into a comfortable norm, and sustaining faith is enough to keep you going.

And for many others, probably the only time we ever sensed mustard seed faith was when we accepted Christ and were faced with having to tell our colleagues and family. There was fear, and excitement, a sense of unknowing, the thrill of a new beginning; but once we had told them, we settled down to sustaining faith.

For all of us the question is "When was the last time you expressed Mustard Seed Faith?" What things are you believing God for today **THAT ARE EXERCISING AND STRETCHING YOUR FAITH?** I fear that too many of us live a life that under-challenges God, we never really believe him, or ask him, for the

impossible. We are satisfied with the normal, the known, the comfortable.

I marvel at some of the Pentecostal churches, and their sometimes amazing expression of faith; the bold proclamations and statements they make about God and his power, and what they are believing him for – requests for healing, for the infilling of the Spirit, for thousands converted, for new territories, etc. They are bold to believe God for great things, and to exercise faith. I think to myself that God probably looks at them, holds his head like this and says “*Boy, do these people ask me for impossible requests BUT because they have expressed MUSTARD SEED faith, I will honor their request!*”

I fear that for us whom God has blessed with so many resources, so much wealth, so much giftedness, such experience, many, many contacts - that we have become content to live only on sustaining faith, we never express mustard seed faith. Think of the last time you faced some sort of stressful crisis – what was your first reaction? Did you fall on your knees and cry out to God in faith, or did you begin to think, “*Whom do I know at Nyayo house? What contact do I have to speed up things?*” This is not faith.

Because we are so blessed, too many of us UNDER-CHALLENGE God. I was talking with Marta Bennett a couple of weeks ago and she told me how she was at a red light and one of these parking boys came to ask for money. He asked for 10/=, and Marta’s response was what will you do with 10/=. The boy replied he would use it to buy a loaf of bread, to which Marta responded “*Where can you find a loaf of bread for 10/=*”. The boy however understood Marta to be rebuking him, so he immediately said “*OK, give me just 5/=*”. Marta however, had meant the question in the sense of “*Boy, where is this you buy bread so cheaply. Tell me so that I can also buy*”.

We do this with God our father all the time. We go up to him in prayer and ask “*Lord, give me 20 cents*”. And God asks in amazement “*What in the world will you do with 20 cents?*” We take this as a rebuke and so immediately say “*OK, just 10 cents*”, where as what God meant was “*What in the world will you ever accomplish with just 20 cents, ask me for 2000/= instead, I’m your father and I’m eager to give*” We underchallenge God. We are too easily satisfied with the normal, we don’t ask him for anything big and unusual, and we’re too quick to make excuses for him because we don’t see him doing anything out of the ordinary. We underchallenge God.

Did you know that there are only 2 places in scripture where God says “***Nothing will be impossible for you***” The first is Gen 11:9 where God talks about people working together in unity. The second is about people expressing mustard seed faith (Mt 13:20).

So let me ask you my question again – how is your faith challenging God? What impossible prayers are you currently praying? When God sees your faith and hears your prayers, does he say to himself “*Boy! Do I feel challenged? At Long last you have given me something to bite into. Now I can show you my might!*”

I believe that the vision God has given us is a vision that will take mustard seed faith to fulfil. Unless God works miraculously among us, it will never be accomplished, BUT believe you me, when Lee and Bruce come to visit us in 10 years time, we will no longer be worshipping here, we will be in that megachurch we talked about, a church that has presence, a church that will shape the faith of the city, and a church that will have a prophetic voice for this nation. Nairobi Chapel will have a church in Dar-es-salam and in Kampala. We will have at least 100 churches dotting the suburbs and slums of our cities.

But this is not all, for we now come to the **5th part** of our vision – that we are believing God to use us **to leave a legacy of Christian institutions and ministries** that will carry the witness of our faith into the next generation – institutions such as schools, children’s homes, polytechnics, hospitals – institutions that will outlive us and continue being a witness beyond us. And so we will begin to put the pieces in place, on each of the major outlets from Nairobi City, and in the fast growing areas of the city like Embakasi, we wish to acquire large tracts of land to build schools, and other institutions. In our church planting work we will seek to place the churches on large land so that we can use the same properties for building Christian institutions. Already in our slum church in Gituamba, a church that has about 50 adults and that we will open and dedicate on the 14th of March, the slum village elders gave us 1 ½ acres of land (which is a large tract in the congestion of the slum) to start a school for their children, and now we have about 30 nursery kids meeting in the church. We will continue this model.

3. PLANTING YOUR DREAM

How has God called you to be a part of this vision? In this way, that we are believing him to give YOU the vision. To many of us here, God has given the dream to begin these sorts of institutions and ministries.

- The dream for a clinic ministry in the slum was not entrusted to the elders, but to Max, who had the faith, with the blessings and involvement of the church, to plant his idea and to see God water and give it growth.
- Muhia planted his dream, and the church has given him the start up costs and land he needs, but the vision was entrusted to him by God and he is answerable before God for it’s growth.

Our prayer is not that the Lord will give the elders all these dreams and ideas, but that he will give you the seed thots and vision, and that we will stand behind you, work with you, form a team of people with a similar vision around you, and bless you as you plant your seed and watch God give it growth. Can it be done? Yes – I challenge you to take your dream, and exercise mustard seed faith, commit the seed to the ground, and watch God give it growth.

To many of us here God has given these dreams – we dream, we wish, we long to see a certain institution or ministry started. We sense Gods calling, but we don’t often display the faith or courage, or even when we do, we don’t know how to begin. Now we ask you to commit your seed to the ground, and we will ask God to use us as a church to help you commit that seed to the ground. And the process will be a simple one – firstly share this dream with your ekklesia group, and begin to pray together about it. If after prayer the ekklesia group counsels that this is indeed the leading of the Lord, then come and share the idea with one of the pastors, and then with the elders. If they too sense this is the Lords leading, then we will give you opportunity to share your vision with the church, and invite any others that the Lord may be calling in the same direction to come alongside you.

When God raises 4 – 5 others who will commit themselves to birthing this ministry or institution, then we will see this as confirmation by the Lord for the Chapel to commit its funds and resources to this ministry, and we will begin together. However, while this ministry is answerable to the elders, ultimately the real responsibility belongs to you and the mission group around you.

As we do this, I want to speak a special word of challenge to all of us, but especially to those of us who have had a chance to have been working for a long time. God has entrusted valuable resources, experience, wisdom, skills and gifts to us. But too

many of us are caught in the trap of this generation, trying to use all these resources to further our career and to live only for ourselves. Life is not worth living if all we ever do is live for ourselves – we have to live for something greater than ourselves, something that will outlive us,

- and so, for the sake of the generations that will come after us, I'm calling you to put your resources and gifts to something greater than yourself by exercising mustard seed faith.
- for the sake of the Kingdom of God, I'm calling you to dream. I'm calling you to sacrifice, to reach out and give time and energy, your wisdom and counsel, to give money and land to establish these ministries and institutions that will continue to bear testimony to the generations to come.

To 4 or 5 people here, God has given the dream to start a 1st class Christian school. To others he's given the dream to start a hospital. Yet others here must have the dream to begin a bank that will help poor families with no capital, to start small scale businesses, to others the dream to begin a Christian Radio station, or a TV network. Are you one of them? Will you exercise mustard seed faith? Will you step away from you fear, and a life that underchallenges God.

He's not asking you for tons of faith, he asks for mustard seed faith – it is enough, he will do the rest. For he says *I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed. . .*
Nothing will be impossible for you"

Someone has said that the correct way to spell faith is R . . ah, you think I've already got the spelling wrong, but the correct way to spell faith is . . .

R – I – S – K

I conclude by reminding you something Mr. Njeru, one of our former elders, once told me . . . of a plaque he once had hanging in his home that read

TRUST IN THE LORD

but the ' T ' had worked itself loose and fallen off, so the plaque now read

RUST IN THE LORD

If we never exercise mustard seed faith, we will rust in the Lord. Yes, we will still be "in the lord" but at the end of life we will only reflect dimly a shadow of what we could have accomplished and been. It will then be said of us, "*They had so much potential for good, but they never used It . . .*" May this never be!