

**Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service.**  
**Sunday October 5th. Increase our....?**  
**Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.**



**Call to Worship.** Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; Psalm 37:7a

## **STF 20**

Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here;  
come bow before him now  
with reverence and fear:  
in him no sin is found -  
we stand on holy ground.  
Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here.

Be still,  
for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around;  
he burns with holy fire,  
with splendour he is crowned:

how awesome is the sight -  
our radiant King of light!  
Be still,  
for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.

Be still,  
for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place;  
he comes to cleanse and heal,  
to minister his grace:  
no work too hard for him -  
in faith receive from him.  
Be still,  
for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place.

## **Prayers of adoration and confession**

Gracious God, give us wisdom to perceive you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate on you and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-550)

Gracious God, we don't make enough time to be still in your presence. If we did we would become aware of your awesomeness, your holiness and your splendour in more ways than we can imagine. Even more so we would be blessed by your power to cleanse and heal all that is wrong within us. Forgive us for our busyness and our lack of focus on the things that will feed the faith that you invest in us. Help us to truly feel your presence in the places that we are in and to worship you. **Amen**

## **Bible reading. Luke 17:5-10**

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. "Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

## **Reflection**

This is a challenging week as we consider two important social issues that are brought to our attention by the special commemorations of their causes this week. Today is homelessness Sunday. The day falls on the Sunday before homelessness day on October 10th. Which is also marked as World Mental Health Day. We observed in the UK mental health awareness week in May but this date is about the mental health needs of the whole world.

As I begin to write this I have had a notification from the Nextdoor app about a family that are going to be made homeless this week. I have also traveled to my holiday destination and passed numerous people sitting begging. I know even in this idyllic part of the world that I will pass by the guys who sit on cardboard outside the exclusive hotels. I have had a couple of conversations already with fellow holiday makers who have shared their troubles about various mental health issues they are trying to cope with in their families. So the issues are there around us wherever we are. Are our eyes and ears open to the needs of just two of these very real and difficult issues that are in the world around us?

I feel privileged that I have not been sheltered from these issues and have been blessed with numerous encounters with those that we might not even consider or notice. Last year in this lovely holiday resort I was passing by one of the very exclusive hotels on my mobility scooter and a young man got off his cardboard blanket to put an artificial flower in my basket. We know giving money is not always the best thing to do for someone on the street, but I did reach for my purse and he stopped me and just smiled. We spoke different languages but we both understood he wanted to do something for me. I was so touched by his generous spirit. So often I think we close down from people who we might find challenging because, what can we do or say? Or we feel threatened by fears about these people who we perceive as different to us. Trust can be a big barrier and a problem. I was humbled that the guy who gave me the flower trusted that I would accept it. We hear those old tapes and warnings in our heads about "do be careful", and so on. What if the tables were turned around and we were the ones that society labels as different, people to be cautious around?

Our bible passage today soon moves from the cosy reply of Jesus to the disciples to more challenging words. The disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith. We could ask similar questions especially when we think of the desperate needs of the world today. Increase our faith in humanity, increase our faith in how we can make a better world for everyone to live in. Increase our faith in what difference we can make in such monumental situations that are world wide. Increase our faith in those we find difficult to understand.

Jesus' answer says it is not about the size of your faith that is important, but rather what you do with it. The mustard seed is a fantastic example. It's such a tiny a spec and so seemingly insignificant and yet if you plant it and see how it grows it is a marvel to behold.

It's not a question about the size of your faith but you must have some faith to ask for more. A little like Oliver Twist who dared to believe that the workhouse keeper would give him some more food. Do we dare to believe that God will give us more? Or do we fear him as much as Charles Dickens fictional character? To ask for more faith has to mean we have some faith that we want increased, or to experience more of. However it's more a question of who do you put your trust in? Do you really trust God?

I guess we all at times warm to the disciples question and echo it ourselves. "If only I had more faith". So what Jesus is saying is you have got enough faith, but it's a question of who is that faith in and, what are you doing with that faith?

I had a conversation just recently with someone about seeds that will be planted and what they might grow into. Seed packets are always plentiful in content. More than I could ever plant and grow seedlings from. I might try to keep them safe and perhaps use them another year only to discover when planting time comes around that they have spoiled and are useless. We can say that about our own faith. It might seem so small but if it's not used then what use is it?

So the question is not about size but about what we do with what we have got. Jesus said, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. I don't know if we can talk to the trees and expect a response but I did look up how big mulberry trees are. Just incase it's a matter of moving the tree yourself and this is what I discovered;

Mulberry trees grow relatively quickly and can provide shade and habitat faster than many other fruit trees. A 20-year-old red mulberry tree, for example, can already be around 45 feet tall.

Wow! That's a mega big tree. So Jesus is saying you can look at what might seem monumental in size and you can make a difference with your tiny spec of faith.

When you think about it, there's nothing more ridiculously useless than replanting a mulberry tree in the ocean! And I wonder if Jesus wasn't reminding his disciples that faith isn't manifested in flashy magic tricks, or pointless, self congratulatory displays of power, or in destruction and uprooting, but in daily acts of faithfulness.

It is great when someone makes a big difference to a situation and we have our rightful heroes. The ones I admire are those who really want to just quietly get on with the job in hand and not have all the grandiose overtures of public recognition. People like Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Some of her pearls of wisdom are: "It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving."

"A life not lived for others is not a life."

"I prefer you to make mistakes in kindness than work miracles in unkindness."

I am reminded of that lovely story about a lot of starfish that were washed up on the shoreline. A woman was seen picking up one at a time and tossing them back into the sea. Hardly making a difference to the numbers. Which was pointed out to her by two onlookers who questioned what difference she thought she was making? She calmly responded, "made a difference to that one". We can see the monumental problem's in the plight of the homeless and those suffering from the vast array of mental health issues and we might feel small and powerless to make any inroads into the problems, even to those known to us. But if we use the faith that God has given us, no matter how small it will make a difference.

However, I could find myself saying, "well when I started out in ministry...." I was at the Albert Hall in Nottingham. Which is true. It was a great social mission centre in the heart of the city. We constantly tried to find ways to work with the homeless and those with mental illnesses. Later in military life I came across the

real problem of post traumatic stress disorder. So I could say over the years and in numerous situations “I have done my bit!” I don’t want to, but it is a phrase we sometimes use to justify not having to get involved. “I’ve done my bit, let someone else do theirs.” I think that this is the reason Jesus offers these harsh words in our bible passage. We have had the cosy conversation about, well you have got enough faith no matter how small it feels. Now it’s a question of what are you going to do with it? Suppose Jesus had responded to the disciples question with, “yes of course I will increase your faith.” There’s still the question of what are you going to do with it?

So we have this uncomfortable story of a servant and just doing your duty. When we have done our bit, what ever we consider that to be, is it enough. Or will we feel like God is condemning us for not doing more. Jesus says, “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

Expecting God to do our faithfulness for us is like a slave expecting to be waited on by his master. It is so hard to have faith today. Looking at all the serious issues facing us on all fronts, it’s hard not to think that the whole world itself is coming apart at the seams before our eyes. It is so easy to get overwhelmed. It is so easy to throw our hands up and ask God to fix it, or to fix us so we can keep moving. But, I think, the message of today’s Gospel reading is that we’re not suffering from a ‘lack’ of anything. We have what we need. We don’t need ‘more’ faith; we just need faith and faithfulness itself. It’s true that we cannot solve the world’s problems on our own. But God doesn’t ask us individually to solve the world’s problems. What we are called to do is to live the life we’ve been given faithfully: to act as best as we are able. I’m not suggesting this is easy. It is hard. But God is powerful and has empowered us— each and every one of us — to live faithfully, to serve our communities, and to try to live by the example of all that Jesus was and is. And the more of us that do that, the more the world will change. As Jesus says, this type of faith can move a mountain, or in the words of today’s reading, a mulberry tree — a species whose root systems are as notoriously complicated and intractable as are our world’s myriad of problems. So then, as we face this new week and think about the two needy causes that are brought to our attention, let us remember this powerful teaching from Jesus today: We don’t need ‘more’ faith. We just need faith.

### STF 663

I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
my hand will save.  
I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord.  
Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord,  
if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people’s pain;  
I have wept for love of them.  
They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my word to them.  
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts are satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send?

### Prayers of Intercession:

**from the charity, ‘Housing Justice.’** Written by Peter, a former member of staff.

Heavenly Father and creator of all, We come to you this day to pray for the mental health and the wellbeing of those who are homeless on the streets of our great and wealthy nation of the United Kingdom. As Christians we are reminded, we are your children and we are the hands and feet, ears and eyes of your Son Jesus Christ who stated in the sermon on the mount “Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of God” We pray for those on the streets to receive the right care and love to get a place they can call home. We pray for those on the streets to receive the right intervention to give them a sound and quiet mind. We pray for all the staff and volunteers who selflessly give of their time and resources to provide love, care, and support for those suffering from homelessness. Finally, we pray for all those in authority and power to make the right decisions that will finally bring an end to the scourge of rough sleeping on our streets forever.

## Prayers for world mental health.

We pray for all those whose mental well-being is threatened. Grant clarity and peace to minds in turmoil, and guide them to the support and resources they desperately need. Strengthen our communities to be places of comfort and healing, where every story of struggle can find resilience and hope.

We pray for those who are silent in their suffering, that their voices may be heard and their struggles acknowledged with compassion. For caregivers and healers, grant wisdom, strength, and patience in their loving service.

Remind us that in every person's story, there is a unique strength. Let us be a force for good, fostering communities where everyone feels cherished, supported, and never alone. Guide us to bridge awareness into action, ensuring that good mental health is a right for all. In Your name we pray. **Amen**

## Let us say the Lord's Prayer.

### STF 639

Through the love of God our Saviour  
all will be well.

Free and changeless is his favour;  
all, all is well.

Precious is the blood that healed us,  
perfect is the grace that sealed us,  
strong the hand stretched forth to shield us;  
all must be well.

Though we pass through tribulation,  
all will be well.

Christ has purchased full salvation,  
all, all is well.

Happy still in God confiding,  
fruitful, if in Christ abiding,  
holy, through the Spirit's guiding;  
all must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow;  
all will be well.

Faith can sing through days of sorrow  
all, all is well.

On our Father's love relying,  
Jesus every need supplying,  
then in living or in dying,  
all must be well.



## The Blessing

Lord, increase our faith so that we may always serve you with humble Hearts and live as your faithful servants. May we and all people in any kind of need, know the blessing of your awesome presence. A presence that brings us peace and comfort in all our lives **Amen**

This written Service was prepared on Thursday 11th September.  
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