

Lam 1:1-6/2 Timothy 1:1-14/Luke 17:5-10

Yesterday we were observing the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. The word **“truth”** is very critical because Timothy Tyson once said, **“If there is to be Reconciliation, first there must be truth”**. Our Outreach Team organized for us an important event yesterday, the Tea, Bannock, and afternoon with some Indigenous Artists. Saturday before yesterday was the Emerging Artist Exhibition and Sale. Seeing the displays at the Emerging Artist Exhibition and Sale and listening to the stories by the Indigenous Artist evoked some deep emotions within me. I would believe that the same emotions were experienced by the Israelites when they set by the rivers of Babylon and start remembering Jerusalem. 70 years in bondage but the Israelites would still find time every day to sit by the rivers of Babylon and start remembering Zion. Some of us we failed to attend either one of the two big events i.e. the Emerging Artist Exhibition and Sale or the Tea, Bannock and afternoon with some Indigenous Artists due to our busy schedules. Not a problem, but I feel challenged by the Israelites because they were in bondage, not even in charge of their lives but still every day for 70 years, generation after generations, they would find time to sit by the rivers of Babylon and start remembering Zion. They lost hope in farming, they lost hope in marriage, but they their faith in God, one day the God of Zion will deliver us and we will go back to Jerusalem-faith of the mustard seed, they sat down and wept when they remembered Zion.

The mustard seed, just like the Israelites/just like the indigenous/just like the underrated slave in verses 7-10 may appear to be less important but given a chance it grew and provided shelter to all the birds of the air.

The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds. Jesus chooses this tiny seed to set up a contrast with the large sycamore tree. Hyperbolically, Jesus demonstrated the great power of even the smallest bit of faith. It is the same kind of exaggerated language that Jesus will use later to describe a camel going through the eye of a needle (Luke 18:25).

Reading Luke, its not clear whether Jesus was affirming the disciples' faith or rebuking them for their lack of faith. However, in the parallel story in Matthew's Gospel, the disciples failed to heal an epileptic boy, and Jesus says that their failure was one of faith (Matthew 17:20). Since Luke leaves the matter of the disciples' faith unsettled, we should probably

let Matthew settle it for us. If we do that, Jesus means, **“If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, which you do not yet have....”** The time will come, however, after the resurrection when you would have such faith. But the required faith is faith in God, not faith in self/money/weapons/raw power/people. The power behind the faith that Jesus mentions here is God’s power, and it is faith in God that allows us to appropriate that power.

Matthew’s version which is the most familiar one, speaks of moving a mountain instead of uprooting a tree. In Luke’s version, Jesus speaks of uprooting a sycamore tree and planting it in the sea. The point is that faith, even in small quantities, has great power. **The person of faith taps into God’s power, which makes all things possible, even moving trees and causing them to grow in saltwater. It is not our faith that works these wonders, but the God who stands behind our faith. Our faith, then, is like the one hundred-dollar note printed on paper worth less than one cent. Such a bill has value only as it is backed by the full faith and credit of the government. So, also our faith has value only because God blesses faith and empowers the faithful**

All the parables we have been reading for the past four weeks or so are parables of the kingdom. And the common feature in all these parables is that the kingdom of God is about humble beginnings. Last Sunday Mary preached on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, humble beginnings. Today again, the mustard seed-humble beginnings. There is always a mustard seed in each human being, every human being is created with a potential to do wonders but sometimes it takes us to realize where our potential lies, sometimes it takes others to notice our potential, and sometimes we are unfortunate that our potentials can never be noticed till death. The kingdom of God is about grace, life is about grace. This is the reason why Paul is talking to Timothy is saying, **“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, Lives in you. For this reason, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you...”** Paul is confident that there is a potential in Timothy, and he intends to ride on that potential. There is potential in every human being, there is a mustard seed in every human being.

- If you have a sweet voice, don't wait to be invited to join the choir, allow God's grace to ride on your sweet voice and that voice is your key to the kingdom.
- If you have wisdom, don't wait to be begged to be in the council, allow God's grace to ride on your wisdom and that wisdom is your key to the kingdom.
- If you have the gift of humour, don't wait to be asked to join the hospitality team just volunteer, allowing God's grace to ride on your potential.
- If you are gifted in talking, why can't you try reading in the Church or even preaching? Don't wait to be begged, allow God's grace to ride on your potential.

By allowing God's grace to ride on your potential, you are not only doing a favour to yourself but to the body of Christ. We are given to give to others; we are saved to save others; and we are blessed to bless others. Just like the mustard seed, very humble and small. After being blessed, it grew into a big tree and provided shelter to all the birds of the air.

Allow me to conclude by reminding all of us that for reconciliation to be achieved it takes everyone's effort as echoed by Nelson Mandela, **"Reconciliation means working together to correct the legacy of the past injustices"**

Amen.