



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

In the name of the loving, liberating, and life-giving God. Amen.

Well, as some of you might remember, before becoming a priest, I was a tax attorney and my specialty was defending people from the IRS. And before that, I did a short stint as a divorce lawyer. While those two areas of the law could not have been more different, they did have one thing in common. In both of those cases, my clients' financial situation, well, let's just say it was never ideal, and their solutions were often the same. Chris, if I only had more money, I could pay off my taxes. If I only had more money, I could afford this spousal support order. If I only had a little more money, I could pay off these debts and we wouldn't have to sell the house. And on it went like that.

And while most of us are probably not in such financial straits, at least I hope not, I'm guessing we've all probably said something similar to ourselves from time to time. If I only had a little more money, I'd pay off my credit cards. If I only had a little more money, I'd start saving for a retirement. If only I had a little more, I'd increase my pledge. I'd start a college fund. I'd fix that roof. I'd afford that summer house. I'd finally buy that Tesla. But for some reason, no matter how far we advance in our careers, no matter how high up the ladder we climb, there always seems to be something more that's just beyond our reach.

This is what's known as Parkinson's law, which tells us that if left unchecked, our expenses will inevitably rise to meet our income, helping to ensure that no matter how much we earn, no matter how much we accumulate, we'll always be left feeling like it's never enough. And it isn't limited to money, is it? We say the same kinds of things around time, don't we? If we only had a little more time, I could go to the gym each morning. If only I had a little more time, I'd take that class I've been meaning to sign up for. If only I had a little more time, I'd cook healthier meals. I'd be home in time to read to my kids before bed.

And I'd argue actually that this notion of never having enough has found its way into nearly every nook and cranny of our lives. If only I was more organized, I could finish that project I started. If only I was better looking or more charming, I'd be the life of the party, or maybe I wouldn't feel so invisible. If I was smarter or had more credentials. If I went to a better school, I'd feel like a success. If only I was in better shape, if only I was younger, if only I had more clothes, then I would finally fit in.

This feeling of never enough, it can even creep in to our spiritual lives, as we hear in our gospel today. Increase our faith, the disciples cry out. If only we had more faith, then we could do what you're asking, they say. And the context here is that Jesus has just finished teaching them about the need to forgive and how like God, we too must be limitless in our willingness to forgive those who sin against us.

Jesus even gives them an example of someone sinning against us seven times in a single day, and they keep coming back over and over. I am sorry. I promise I won't do that again. I repent. And what must we do, He says? Forgive them every single time, over and over. And you know what? If I had been there, I probably would be right alongside asking for more faith as well. Forgiveness is hard enough, but that kind of forgiveness, endless forgiveness. And it's not just forgiveness, right? I seem to fall short in all kinds of places when it comes to my faith. In fact, rarely a day goes by when I'm not asking for more faith in one way or another. Increase my faith so I won't be so anxious about the future. Increase my faith so I'll be more present, not be so rushed all the time. Increase my faith so I can be more grateful for the blessings that are all around me. Increase my faith so I can finally stop the things I know I shouldn't and start doing the things I know I should.

So yeah, faith can often feel like just one more thing, one more thing, in a long list of things that I never seem to have enough of. So what does Jesus say when we come to Him asking for more faith? What does he say? No. He says, no, you don't need more faith, He says, because even if all you had was the faith of a mustard seed, even if all you had was the smallest smidgen of faith, a faith that is no bigger than the head of a pin, then you would already have all the faith you need to do the impossible.

Even if there are days when your faith feels like it's hanging by a thread, you have enough. Even if it comes riddled with doubts, even if it seems dwarfed by the faith of the great saints that adorn our stained glass windows, you have all you need. Each of you, all you need. And we've heard this kind of message from Jesus before, have we not? Think back to the gospel ball of Matthew when He says, stop worrying. Stop worrying about the future. Stop worrying about what you're going to wear and what you're going to eat. Stop worrying about your body and what you will own and what you will make. Stop worrying. Don't you know, don't you know that I'm going to give you everything that you really need? Everything you need to love and to be loved.

I find this gospel to be profound and I'm not sure how it all works, but to just hear that from Jesus, to just hear Him say that faith, it's not one more thing to measure. It's not one more thing to have to compare. It's not one more thing to find wanting. It's like a weight is lifted from my shoulders when I hear that. It's

like I can breathe again. It's not how much faith we have. It's not about having a perfect faith. It's about what are we going to do with whatever faith we've been given?

And it doesn't have to be a big thing. Mother Theresa, one of the great heroes of the faith herself, she said, We won't all do great things, but we can all do small things with great love. We can all do small things with great love. At the conference we held here yesterday, Dr. Greg Ellis asked us to turn to our neighbor at the table and to share the name of someone who had had a profound impact on your faith. And we didn't have a lot of time to think about it, so I named the first person that came to my mind. And it was someone whose name I never got, but whose love I've never forgotten.

I'd just passed the bar exam, this was years ago, and I was on my way to court for the very first hearing. I'd never been on my own in court before. And I was a nervous wreck to say the least. And for some reason I thought, you know, getting some more coffee would be a good idea, so I stopped at Starbucks. And there was this barista on the other side of the counter, and she must have seen something in my face, she must have seen something in my demeanor because after she took my money, she took my hand and she looked me in the eye. And in the midst of that loud, crowded coffee house, she said, are you okay? I don't remember my answer, but I'll never forget how her question made me feel. That simple, tiniest of gestures, that small moment, I felt seen. I felt like a person again. I felt myself relaxed a little and I chuckled. She smiled and suddenly just like that, I was okay.

And I have no idea the size of her faith. I have no idea what doubts she might have carried with her, but I've never forgotten that small thing done with great love. The world, the world wants to tell us that we don't have enough. The world wants to tell us that we ourselves are not enough. It wants to keep us on this treadmill of comparison and competition and scarcity where we have to climb over one another, trying to endlessly measure up and always needing more in order to keep up.

Jesus is telling us today, don't believe it. Don't buy into it. It's perhaps one of the biggest lies we've ever been sold. He wants us to know that we are enough, that we are each exactly who God intended when He made us, and He wouldn't change a thing. Each of us perfectly unique, perfectly different, perfectly strange and odd and wonderfully diverse. But when we come together, when we come together, we become His body on earth once more, so that we might offer His love and compassion and yes, a forgiveness that knows no limits. Everything that this hurting world truly needs.

This is not a prosperity gospel I'm preaching. Using the faith we've been given is not going to make us younger, and it doesn't make us thinner. It doesn't make

us charming or smarter. It's not going to bring us more money or new clothes. It's not going to buy us that dream house and no, it's not going to get us that Tesla. Faith will not make those things magically come our way. But what will come our way are moments with intimate strangers, angels in disguise, unexpected moments of grace, deeper relationships, healed friendships. What comes your way is the freedom to forgive more often, and the desire to give more freely.

What comes your way is a new sense of who you really are and whose you really are. And all that stuff, all that stuff that we once thought was so important, all those things we once thought were so needed, well, they're just going to fade into the background. They become long forgotten as our horizons widen, as our lives open up, as new dreams come into view, as we begin to see one another as God sees us. And the impossibility of loving one another as much as ourselves becomes a real possibility, not for any recognition or reward, but just because it's who we are, who we've become. We already have all that we need. The question for today is how will we use the faith we've been given?

Amen.