

Today's readings give us two heartfelt prayers — two desperate cries that sound painfully familiar to anyone who's ever wondered where God is in the middle of crisis or chaos.

From the prophet Habakkuk: "How long, O Lord, shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you, 'Violence!' and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?"

And from the apostles: "Increase our faith!"

Both are cries that come from deep places of fear, frustration, and exhaustion — and both could just as easily have been spoken by us.

Habakkuk's cry is not the confident declaration of a prophet delivering God's message to the people. Instead, it's the voice of a prophet daring to speak to God *on behalf of* the people. He looks around and sees violence, corruption, and destruction everywhere. Justice, he says, "never prevails." It's as if he's shouting into the wind — unheard, unseen, unanswered.

Habakkuk's questions are the same ones we ask when the news overwhelms us, when prayers seem to echo back in silence:

Why do bad things keep happening?

Why doesn't God intervene?

How long until things change?

Is God even listening?

These are the kinds of questions that can make or break a person's faith.

Yet Habakkuk does something remarkable: he doesn't walk away. He *waits*. He says, "I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what God will say to me." And God *does* answer — though probably not in the comforting way Habakkuk hoped. God tells him there is a plan unfolding: "Write the vision; make it plain... For there is still a vision for the appointed time... If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come."

And then God reminds him: “The righteous live by their faith.”

To live by faith means to keep walking when the path ahead is unclear. It means believing in God’s goodness even when the world around us feels anything but good. It means seeing violence and destruction and still trusting that peace and justice are coming — not because we see it yet, but because we trust the One who promised it.

Then we turn to the disciples’ plea: “Increase our faith!” It’s not a random request — it’s a cry of overwhelm. Just before this, Jesus has been teaching them about what true discipleship looks like. He warns them not to cause others to stumble: “It would be better,” he says, “if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than to lead another astray.” And if that’s not heavy enough, Jesus continues they must forgive others — not once or twice, but over and over again. “Even if they sin against you seven times in a single day, and seven times say ‘I repent,’ you must forgive.”

No wonder they throw up their hands and cry, “Lord, increase our faith!” Who among us could do that? Most of us would need a minute — a day, a week, maybe years — before we could even *begin* to forgive that many times.

But Jesus’ response isn’t exactly reassuring. He doesn’t say, “Yes, let me give you more faith.” He says, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could tell this tree to uproot itself and plant itself in the sea, and it would obey you.” In other words: you already have enough.

Then, as if to drive the point home, Jesus tells a story about a servant who, after doing all that’s required, doesn’t expect a reward or applause.

“When you have done all that you were ordered to do,” he says, “say, ‘We have done only what we ought to have done.’”

Ouch. That’s not exactly the motivational speech we were hoping for. Jesus is not handing out any gold stars.

But maybe Jesus' point is this: Faith isn't about the *quantity* we have; it's about the *quality* of how we use it. It's not about asking for more before we begin; it's about trusting that what we've already been given is enough — enough to forgive, enough to serve, enough to love.

Which reminds me of a story about a man who was angry with God — much like Habakkuk. He looked around at his community and saw hunger, poverty, and suffering. He shouted, "God, why don't you do something to feed these people? How can you sit silently and allow them to starve?"

And in the silence that followed, he realized something that changed him. He realized that those same hungry people looking back at him, were the faces of God asking, "Why don't *you* do something? How can *you* sit silently by and allow us to starve?"

In that moment, he understood: *he* was God's answer. *He* was the one God had sent — the hands, the feet, the heart through which God's compassion could move.

Faith is not waiting for God to act; it's realizing that God may already be waiting for *us*.

The good news — and yes, there *is* good news — is that God has already told us what's required of us.

To love God.

To love our neighbors.

To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

And we *can* do it — not through our own strength, but through God's grace working within us and among us. We may think we need more faith, but perhaps what we really need is more courage. More conviction. More willingness to use the faith we already have — even if it's no bigger than a mustard seed.

Because with even that much faith, mountains can move.

With even that much faith, forgiveness can begin.

With even that much faith, despair can turn to hope, and the silence of God can become the whisper of grace saying, “You are enough. Go and do what I have called you to do.”

So the next time we want to cry out “How long?”

Or want to plead with God to “Increase our faith,”

May we remember that God’s answer may just be:

“I am with you. You already have what you need. Now live it.”