Sunday 18th October 2026
With a Little Faith…
Matthew 17:14-20

Welcome

- What do you do when something isn't working in your house? For example: Do you turn the computer off and on again, thump the top of the telly, or make good use of superglue and sticky tape?

In the Bible reading today the disciples tried to 'fix' the boy but failed and so Jesus was approached instead

- Are you naturally an optimist who expects things to work out, a realist who plans for the worst, or somewhere in between?

Word

Read Matthew 17:14-20:

14 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and
knelt before him. 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has
seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into
the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal
him."
17 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how
long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring
the boy here to me." 18 Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of
the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

19 *Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”*
20 *He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, 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.”*

1. What occurs just before this? (Take a look at the title at the start of Chapter 17 – remind yourself of this event if you are not familiar)
2. There is a huge contrast between the events of verses 1-13 and those in verses 14-20. The first is an intimate spiritual experience and the second is about chaos, crowds and a suffering child. Is our spiritual life sometimes like this – we have moments of spiritual intimacy and then have to do the real work in the real world? Talk about how easy it is to go from a spiritual high to ordinary chaos.
3. How is the father feeling in verses 14 to 16?
4. Why do you think the disciples were unable to heal the boy?
5. Do we sometimes feel disappointed because things are all going wrong despite our best efforts?
6. Jesus says in verse 17: "You unbelieving and perverse generation..." Who do you think he is talking to here - the crowd, the religious leaders, the father, or the disciples? Why?
7. Why do you think Jesus tells the disciples' that their failure is due to ‘little faith’ rather than a lack of technique? Remember He previously gave them authority over unclean spirits (Matthew 10:1)?
8. What is the difference between faith as a feeling and faith as a reliance on God?
9. Do you sometimes rely on your own abilities and skills instead of putting your whole trust in God? Can you think of an example?

10. Do you sometimes find yourself slipping into self-reliance or mechanical Christianity—treating prayer or ministry like a formula rather than a relationship?
11. Jesus describes ‘a little faith’ as a mustard seed. Why is a tiny seed a good image of true faith?
12. A mustard seed is meant to germinate, break open, and grow into a shrub (Matthew 13:31-32). What does an "alive" faith look like compared to a static, theoretical belief?
13. The disciples had previously successfully cast out demons (Matthew 10:1). Does past success lead you to rely more in your own strength?
14. Is there a difference between real weakness/doubt and wilful unbelief/apathy?
15. Have you ever caught yourself praying, "If only I had more faith," as if faith were a commodity you could hoard or squeeze out of yourself? How does Jesus' analogy relieve that pressure?
16. In first-century Jewish culture "uprooting a mountain" was a metaphor for solving an impossible problem. What specific, immovable "mountain" in your life, community or world requires this kind of reliance today?
17. Why do we often pray for massive change while secretly expecting nothing to happen?
18. What would it look like to stop trying to *manufacture* stronger faith this week and instead plant a small, honest act of trust in God's direction?

Optional Extra:

There is a very similar account of this incident in Mark's gospel

Read Mark 9: 14-29

19. In verse 22, the father says to Jesus '**<u>if</u>** you can do anything..' What is Jesus' response to this and what does he mean?
20. In verse 24 the father says, "I believe," in the same breath as "help my unbelief." Is this hypocrisy, or is it radical honesty? Do we sometimes feel like this?
21. Do we sometimes feel like we need to hide our doubts? what makes us feel this way?
22. In verse 28, the disciples ask, "Why could we not cast it out?" Mark records Jesus' answer plainly: *"This kind can come out only by prayer"* (and fasting in some manuscripts). What does Jesus mean? Is it because praying means you are trusting in God for the solution instead of your own abilities?

Worship & Witness

- What's your mountain or mountains?
- Where have you silently attached an "if You can, Lord" to a situation? What changes if you confess that doubt aloud to Him today?
- What would it look like to adopt "Lord, help my unbelief" as a daily prayer before stepping out into your frontline or struggles?