



October 5 – Shovels

When the time came for us to fill our raised garden beds with dirt, we had several tons of soil dropped off on our driveway. This text came to mind. I would have loved to say to that pile of dirt, “move” and to watch it relocate to the raised beds. If any of you have had to haul a lot of dirt before, you probably know the feeling. The pile does not move easily. Either, you have access to a skid-loader and move it a bucket at a time, or, like us, you have shovels and a wheelbarrow.

It was a long day of moving dirt one shovel full at a time. It went to the wheelbarrow and then dumped it into the raised bed. Then the dirt was moved a second time either by rake or by shovel. It took time. It took effort. By dinner time the “mountain” of dirt was moved.

What does it look like to have the kind of faith that can move a mountain? Jesus tells his disciples this and it sounds like hyperbole. It sounds too good to be true. With faith the size of a mustard seed we can defy the laws of physics and demand a mountain to move. This sounds like a scene out of Superman or the Thundermans.

If faith can move mountains, who is it that has that kind of faith? To have such faith may surprise you. It is you. When Jesus says, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,” he is not talking about individual faith. It is in the plural. Jesus is talking about the faith of a group, not an individual. Jesus, like in many other texts, seems to be reminding those gathered around him that if you work together, anything is possible.

In our modern society, it is easy to lose sight of this truth. We live in an individualized society with individual rights and freedoms. That is a good thing. I believe rights and freedom are absolutely vital. With these individual rights and freedoms comes the mindset that a person needs to be self-sufficient, able to handle anything that comes up. If each person does their job everything will work out great.

When we have this mentality, we try to find peace by changing what we can change and then ask for patience to live with those things we cannot change. We look at the world around us and hope for the best. After all, if the leaders do their job, like we do ours, everything will eventually work out, right? And how has that worked out? We stay stuck, and the divisions among us continue to grow. What difference can we make?

That answer may surprise you too. We can change the world. Not by willing it to change, but by working together to be the change in the world. That is exactly what it is, work. We can join voices in asking the mountain to move, and then God hands us a shovel and we get to work. One shovel at a time, we move the mountain.

If you don't believe Jesus, or are skeptical of this pastor, perhaps you will listen to the voice of others. Perhaps J.R. Tolkien in the words of Gandalf, “Some believe it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. I found it is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love.” Or Ted Grimm speaking to Ted Lasso, “It will work...By slowly but surely building a club-wide culture of trust and support through thousands of imperceptible moments, all leading to their inevitable conclusion.” Maybe Flick in *A Bug's Life*, “I have seen ants do amazing things, and every year they manage to pick enough food for themselves and you. So who is the weaker species? Ants don't serve grasshoppers. It is you who need us.”

This text gives us a vital reminder, when we are united in a common vision, we can accomplish anything. Much of what Jesus says is directed at the community, the very body of Christ in this world. We, the people, the body of Christ, can accomplish anything. We can be the change we want to see. Through the faith of a mustard seed, and a shovel, we can move mountains. Jesus did not come incarnate so that we sit by idly and listen to the echoes of hate and anger in the world. Nor did Jesus come near so that we would wait for someone to fix things for us. Jesus gave us the command to love, and to show love to the world. It is time to move a mountain. Grab the shovels. Amen

Pastor Michael Schmidt