

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on BELIEF & FAITH

Theme: Belief & Faith

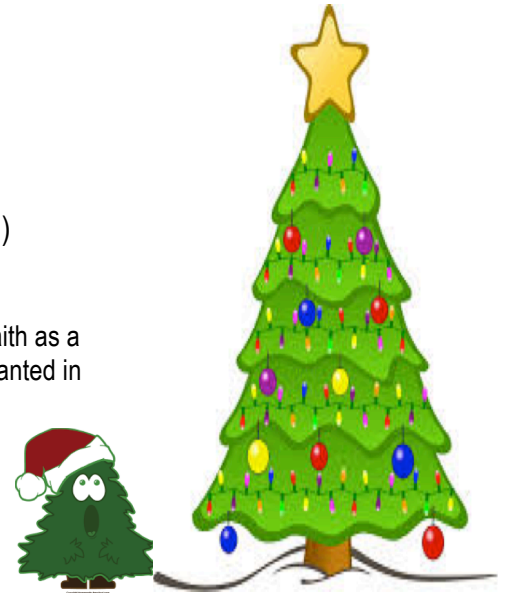
Object: A small Christmas tree seedling or branch. (Or use pictures!)

Scripture: Luke 17:5-6 (RSV or KJV)

"The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

Paree Looy's!

You may be familiar with this scripture and the story about the mustard seed that Jesus told to His disciples. But since it's Christmas, let's give today's story a "holiday twist," and use the "Christmas tree seedling" for today's lesson!



Every December, Christians all over the world home a Christmas tree to celebrate this happy season. Christians have long held the fir tree as a symbol of the **Tree of Life and Belief in God**. And when we add lights (*long ago they used candles!*), they are meant to represent the **Light of Christ**. Have you ever seen how a fir tree grows before it is cut down so we can bring it into our homes? The fir tree starts as a very small, seedling. In fact, the seedling is so small that it's hard to imagine that it could ever grow to be a big, beautiful Christmas tree. Do you think the size of your Christmas tree represents the size of your faith? For example, if you have a very large tree, does this mean your faith is bigger than someone who has a small Christmas tree?

One day, Jesus was talking to his disciples when one of them turned to him and said, "Lord, increase our faith." Jesus answered and said, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can say to this sycamine tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." Wow - that's a lot of faith! To put into Christmas tree seedling terms, Jesus was explaining to His disciples that if they had faith as small as the tiniest tree seedling, amazing things could be accomplished.

I heard a story about a man who read this verse in the Bible and decided to put it to the test. There was a large fir tree out in the forest - perfect for him to use as his Christmas tree that year. So he went out to the forest, stood by the fir tree and said, "In the morning when I wake up from my sleep, I want you to be at my front door so that I can bring you inside and decorate you for Christmas." That night the man went to bed. When he woke up the next morning, he went to the front door, opened it, and found nothing. "Just as I thought!" the man said. "The tree is still in the forest."

Well, the man didn't have mustard seed or even "Christmas tree seedling" sized faith, did he? In fact, he didn't have any faith at all. When he told the tree to be moved, he never expected it to happen. I think that the man misunderstood what Jesus Christ was trying to teach his disciples.

Our Lord was not suggesting that you and I go around trying to move trees from the forest to our front doors just to prove our faith. What He was trying to teach His disciples -- and what He wants you and me to learn -- is that it doesn't take a great faith to produce great results . . . it just takes faith! Results don't depend on us - they depend on **God**. I have no doubt that if our belief and love for God were measured by the size of our Christmas trees, we would find the tallest in the forest! But when it comes to faith in our Lord, we don't need to ask for great faith so that we can do great things -- we just need to ask for faith the size of a Christmas tree seedling so that we can see **God** do great things!

Dear Heavenly Father, we ask for Christmas seedling sized faith. Help us to believe and never doubt your mighty power. Amen.