

Wish lists.

Being married to a teacher

I know that each year teachers put out  
a wish list of things they require  
to effectively teach children.

Not only to teach the academics but  
also to teach on important things  
like sharing, celebrating, and resting.

Wish lists are part of life and there's  
nothing really wrong with them,

I have a wish list I give to family for birthday  
and Christmas and I ask for wish lists from  
the people I love so I can give them  
the things they want on special days.

There's nothing wrong with wish lists. (Pause)

We hear about wishes from the apostles  
who spoke to Jesus, in our gospel.

Lord, "increase our faith," they said.

I know I have made such a prayer request.

Haven't we all asked for more faith when  
we faced a conflict at work or with a friend  
and we wished that we would have  
handled it differently... better?

Haven't you wished for an increase in faith  
after you've prayed and prayed for  
the healing of a loved one,

only to find out the prayers were not answered  
the way you wanted?

I know, I have!

Was it because my faith is  
smaller than even a mustard seed?

If we're thinking that we are taking  
this text out of its context. (Pause)

At the beginning of chapter 17 of Luke is says:

Occasions for stumbling are bound to come,  
but woe to anyone by whom they come.

And then it continues,

"I would be better to wear a millstone necklace  
and take a swim in the deep blue sea

than to cause anyone of these little ones  
to stumble.”

Probably a little different translation than  
the one in the Bible, but that’s what it means.

Jesus was informing his followers that people  
will set traps for them.

Some people will want to shut them up  
about God’s love and Jesus’ place in  
revealing that love.

Some will even teach Christianity  
that’s out of context with Jesus’ teaching.

And even though they make us angry he directs  
his followers on the necessity to forgive.

Not to lay down, not to forget, but to forgive.

Even if it is another disciple in Christ that offends you,  
we must say, “That’s not okay,” and if the  
person  
repents then we must forgive.

Even if it is over and over.

We must forgive or else we cause others

to stumble and then get the millstone  
necklace and ocean swim.

Now we know why they asked for  
an increase in faith because  
faith also means trust.

The apostles did well in sitting up  
to hear Jesus' words.

We do well also in hearing today's lessons.

For like the prophet Habakkuk,  
we cry out at the injustice around the world and  
in our backyard.

We wonder, how long, O Lord,  
will you let the oppressor run free  
and trample the people?

But still, we do not give up the crying out.

The Lord will come, the prophet promises.

Then the help in 2 Timothy when we hear  
how the gospel brings life and immortality to light.  
(Pause)

There's kind of a funny side note,

in our NRSV Bibles the title given  
for this part of Chapter 17 is  
“Some sayings of Jesus.” :-)

It seems like even the editors wished  
to downplay the importance of Jesus’  
words.

These are only just some sayings from Jesus.

Like take them or leave them, but the truth is,  
the apostles ask the wrong question.

Like us, they believe their actions and words  
will always reflect the “quantity” of faith  
within them.

Sometimes even when my faith is strong,  
I’ll do something stupid.

Just like the way sometimes my faith is weak  
but then I’ll find myself doing something  
similar to Jesus.

Today, Jesus teaches, that faith is not some-“thing”  
that can be stored up or even quantified.

It’s not something we need more of.

We have enough, even teeny, tiny faith  
can re-landscape the world.

Christ assures us that we have enough faith  
to uproot these injustices. (Pause)

Dear Church, be assured, you have faith.

Wish for more if you want,  
but today's gospel communicates to us just  
how serious Jesus was about already  
having enough.

And this faith is a way that shows  
there are no times when  
it is acceptable to be  
“less than forgiving,  
less than compassionate,  
less than hospitable.”

God never expects us to be perfect, but  
always forgives, loves and is full of compassion.

We should do these things, too. (Pause)

Keep going, church, be who  
God created you to be,  
it's enough to improve  
the landscape of the world.

AMEN!