



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Deep Dive: Disciples of Little Faith

Talking to the Kids
Faith is hard to talk about with adults, let alone kids. We talk about believing in things like the tooth fairy, Santa Claus, and the Easter Bunny, with the same fervor as we talk about believing in Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit.

But then as our kids grow up they learn that the holidays do not have magic gift bearers, that it is mom and dad placing the reward for a lost tooth, and it becomes natural to wonder then about the reality of God.

Faith in those imaginary cultural icons may have a place in our society, but they do not require action. Faith in God, in Jesus, these have actions ... actions like worship, and serving others, and doing good in the world. Talking about faith in God and Jesus should always be talking about why we live differently because we believe in God and Jesus.

Week 5: Matthew chapters 9 and 10

- Have you ever struggled with your faith? Have you ever sat there and just wondered what it really is all about anyway? Well -- good news. You are not alone! Matthew, writing some 50 years after Jesus' life was writing to a community with the exact struggle. So, Matthew worked into his gospel to address the question, "What if I have little faith?"
- Matthew, who draws much of his gospel themes from Mark, saw Mark describe the disciples as having no faith at all, and progressively get worse as disciples, and how the gospel ends with no action from the disciples. Matthew takes that and adds a new layer, Matthew says these disciples do have faith, it is just little faith.
- But this is important. Because Matthew demonstrates a little faith is all it takes to be the church. The church is a place where sinners, people who get it wrong, can be welcomed in. The church is also a place where people become disciples, and disciples begin with a little faith and grow from there.
- Twice, even the idea of doubt along side belief even appears in the Gospel, most notably after the resurrection. when the disciples come to the mountain in Galilee to meet Jesus, they gather and simultaneously worship and doubt Jesus. And sure, some translations try to separate these actions, but the Greek demonstrates this is a simultaneous expression coming from the same people. Worship and Doubt go together.
- So, too, does beginning discipleship with little faith and the ability to move mountains (Mt 17:20) and can baptize others and teach them Jesus' commandments (Mt 28:16-20). Discipleship begins with little faith. And this is not an insult. It is a gift of beginning. And it is opportunity for growth after all, if Jesus says we start here, Matthew implies, imagine what follows when we have great faith.
- From Matthew's use of the theme of little faith, theologians would develop constructs like "Justification" and "Sanctification." Justification is the pure action of believing in Jesus welcomes into the church, and then what follows is sanctification, the process of becoming more righteous, like Jesus.
- As you read through Matthew's Gospel, notice who Jesus describes as having little faith: the disciples, in general, but Peter in particular -- yes, Peter, the rock upon which the church is built - described by Jesus as having a little faith. But also notice who Jesus describes as having great faith -- a centurion and a Canaanite woman, neither of whom Jesus calls to follow him.
- So, yes, you have probably wondered about your own faith, you have probably questioned the veracity of your own faith. And then you probably wondered if that was a sin -- Matthew says, it not only is definitely NOT a sin, it absolutely the journey of being a disciple.

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy