

Sermon Notes: Oct 5, 2025

Focus: Apostles and Mulberries in our stewardship season

[Lectionary Readings](#)

Luke 17:5-6 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

When I read today's Gospel, I didn't make it past the first word—or technically the second: apostles. I'll come back to that in a moment. Then I tripped over the mulberry tree and found it at least as interesting as the famous mustard seed.

We've all heard sermons about mustard-seed faith, and for good reason. A faith that starts small can lead to world changing results. But why a mulberry tree? And what might apostles and mulberry trees have to do with stewardship, mission, and calling?

Apostles The word "apostle" means "sent one." Strictly speaking, none of us are apostles like the Twelve: we weren't there in the first century, we didn't witness the resurrection, and we weren't directly commissioned by Jesus to work miracles and spread the gospel. By that narrow definition, apostleship was limited to the earliest disciples.

Sending by Jesus made them apostles. But even from the beginning of the New Testament story, the word was getting squishier. "The Apostle Paul" said he was commissioned because he had a vision of the living Jesus. God was sending him, despite the fact that Paul never following Jesus in the flesh.

Taking Paul's approach, maybe we can be apostles if we first practice discipleship: formed by presence of Christ and then sent by the Spirit. The early church had to develop a theology that transcended rigid definitions of apostles. A life of faith would not require Jesus of Palestine to make one a "real" apostle.

I could not help but think of the Blues Brothers' line: "We're on a mission from God." I know my references are hopelessly outdated so here is the montage for those who have never heard of the movie <https://youtu.be/-4YrCFzoKfc>



We are disciples - learners, students of God. Sometimes discipleship deepens to the point where we are sent into the world as apostles.

Disciple: a student of God, open to being formed.

*Apostle: a disciple so deeply formed
that the Spirit sends them to serve.*

Now, Mulberry

*"If you had faith the size of a mustard seed,
you could say to this mulberry tree,
'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,'
and it would obey you.*

This tree has a biblical, cultural history that I found interesting.

Longevity

Both Jews and Romans knew mulberries as symbols of stability, stubbornness, and endurance. That fits with Jesus' point— the idea of pulling a hearty mulberry up and planting it in the sea would sound impossible especially from something so tiny as a mustard seed. Faith, even small, can do the logically impossible.

Audience

Luke is writing with two audiences in mind. He is trying to communicate to the dominant Roman culture while using Jewish values. Jesus' metaphor of the seed uprooting the tree spoke to both. To the Roman mind the mulberry was less a metaphor of tangled intransigence and more of rooted endurance and wisdom.

- Jewish: "That tree is too well rooted to move."
- Roman: "That tree is too prudent and enduring to be shifted."

Jesus' message

Faith the size of the tiniest seed can command an unyielding and deeply rooted tree to do something utterly unnatural — go plant itself in the sea. So, both Jewish and Greco-Roman audiences would hear the impossible contrast. I want to reference page 1 and try to connect the dots. In the story and our everyday lives:

Discipleship forms us

Apostleship sends us.

*Faith, even tiny, can help us, apostles, pull up the mulberry trees
of our lives we thought could never move.*

God uses our mustardy smallness to tackle mulberry trees and to uproot out deep injustice and personal situations that feel intractable.

Todd