

This morning our sermon time began with Mark James sharing a story. It starts when Mark is a young boy, and he learns that someone lives inside their family's telephone. Her name is "Information Please," and she can tell you the time, the weather – anything! One day, when Mark is home alone, he hits his thumb with a hammer. OUCH! He doesn't know what to do! But when he sees the phone, he picks it up and says, "Information Please!" She tells him to ice his finger, and this starts up a years-long relationship, with young Mark calling Information Please whenever he needs help.

When he grows up, Mark realizes that this woman went above and beyond just to help him. She was the first person to give Mark a real-life lesson in loving your neighbor: opening our eyes, seeing needs outside ourselves, and stepping up to make a difference for others.

Then Pastor Museus Dabay shared "the moral of the story:"

What is a saint?

A lot of the time we think of a saint as someone more like a superhero than a regular person. Someone with a more perfect sense of justice and righteousness. Someone willing to dedicate their entire lives to a higher purpose, to the good of others. Someone with miraculous superpowers.

Like St. Francis, who took a vow of poverty and received the stigmata, the wounds of Christ on his own body.

Like St. Joan of Arc, who saw visions of angels and led armies to victory against all odds.

But what about the woman in Mark's story? Was she a saint?

According to our Lutheran faith, all Christians are saints, because God is at work in all of us to make us holy. Even though we are still sinners, God is with us to make us more like Christ. Even when our faith is weak, God is with us to make that faith enough.

This is what Jesus teaches in today's Gospel reading, too. To be a follower of Jesus – to be a saint – does not mean we need special powers or privileges. Instead it means something more like living our ordinary lives for God. We heard the disciples asking Jesus for more: "Increase our faith!" But Jesus replies: *You don't need more than what you have. Faith the size of a mustard seed is enough to bring changes to the world.*

God makes even our little, doubtful faith enough. God makes us saints even though we are sinners. And God uses our everyday decisions to make an impact on others and on our world. As I heard someone say this week: "It's not the quantity of our faith that matters – but the quality of who God is."¹

It's like the other time Jesus talks about a mustard seed: "What is the Kingdom of God like?...It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and put in his own garden. It grew, and became a large tree, and the birds of the sky lodged in its branches" (Luke 13:18-19).

The woman in Mark's story was just doing her job, an un-glamorous job of answering the information line. We might even think of it as a job the size of a mustard seed. But she filled her work with love and with God's love – and God turned her seed into a tree that provided hope and comfort for others.

We don't need to be superheroes. We don't need to have unshakeable, undoubting faith the size of a mountain. God calls us exactly as we are, in the midst of the lives we are living – and God uses whatever we have to bring big blessings to the lives that touch ours. Are there parts of your ordinary life that you can offer to God's service?

What God asks of us is to accept the love and grace of God – to see that we are beloved and forgiven children of God, to see that others are also God's children – and to live our lives out of that identity in each moment of our lives. If we take in God's love for us, God can use even the smallest, most ordinary moments of our lives to make God's love and purpose known in this world.

¹ Joy J. Moore in the Working Preacher *Sermon Brainwave* podcast for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost (October 6, 2019). Posted 28 September 2019. Available online: https://www.workingpreacher.org/brainwave.aspx?podcast_id=1181