

*There must be some kind of way outta here,
Said the joker to the thief,
There's too much confusion,
I can't get no relief.*

That's, of course — *All Along the Watchtower* — by Bob Dylan, made famous by Jimi Hendrix, and now Jerry Noble. In it, we meet two travelers, a joker and a thief, wandering through confusion, trying to make sense of a world that feels upside down. They know something's off. They know there *has* to be a better way.

Unfortunately by the end of Dylan's song, we're left standing on the edge of a storm. No neat resolution. No happy ending. Just confusion and the sense that something is shifting — maybe danger, maybe hope. It's haunting, but it's also honest. Because sometimes faith feels exactly like that — standing in the wind, wondering just what's going to happen next.

The prophet Habakkuk knows that feeling. He looks out at the state of things — violence in the streets, corruption in the courts, injustice everywhere — and cries, *“How long, O Lord? How long will this go on?”*

He's not afraid to speak it aloud: the ache, the confusion, the anger. Habakkuk is not trying to be impressive — he's trying to be **awake**. And when the answers don't come right away, he doesn't give up. He climbs the watchtower and says, *“I will stand at my post, and I will wait to see what God will say.”*

Staying awake, standing watchfully.... I think that's the posture of faith in an age of confusion: not denial, not retreat, but standing alert when we might rather roll over and pull the covers over our head. Because it sure seems like it would be a heck of a lot easier to sleepwalk through a fog like this....but is it really?

Well, sure, it feels safe, because, for a moment, it spares us the ache. If we don't look too closely, we don't have to hurt too deeply. If we stay busy, we don't have to risk hope. Sleepwalking might feel like calm and quiet, but it isn't necessarily safe harbor. While we drift away, the world keeps turning — and the holy work of the Spirit still waits for us.

Thomas Merton once wrote that *“the greatest need of our time is to learn to be awake rather than asleep to the obvious.”* Maybe that's what the prophet's doing on the watchtower — staying awake to what everyone else has chosen to overlook.

Prophets — and poets like Dylan — won't let us stay numb. They rattle the cage. They tell the truth. They call us back to wakefulness. Later in the lyric, he writes what sounds like an invitation to me. *“Let us stop talkin' falsely now. The hour's getting late.”*

Faith, real faith, is staying *awake* in the fog. It's refusing to give up on meaning — refusing to stop looking for where God might still be at work, even when there's a scary storm brewing in the distance.

So, maybe that's why the lectionary slips in a quiet word from Paul this week...a line we might miss. He writes to Timothy, *"Rekindle the gift of God that is within you."*

Rekindle. Like a small fire that's burned low in the night — not dead, just waiting for breath, a little oxygen to bring back the glow and the warmth. Paul knows the watchtower gets cold. He knows the waiting is long and anxiety is seeking companionship. So he reminds Timothy — and, of course, us — that the Spirit we've been given is not one of fear, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

In other words: *Don't let your spark of hope go out. Don't let the waiting harden into cynicism. Fan the embers. Stay awake.*

That one line is enough. *"Rekindle the gift of God that is within you."*

With Jesus today, we meet a group of people who are also tired of waiting: his disciples. They've been following Jesus through miracle and mess, trying to understand his confusing ways of teaching them. And one day they finally throw up their collective hands and shout: for God's sake...*"Increase our faith!"*

Can't you hear the tone? *"We're trying, Lord. We really are. But this is a lot. Could you give us a little more to work with?"* They want a boost. Some kind of divine triple-espresso shot of clarity.

We should give the disciples some credit though. Because right before this moment, Jesus has been saying some *pretty hard things*:

"Don't be the cause of someone else's stumbling," he warns them,

"and if a person wrongs you seven times in a single day — forgive them. Every time. Even seventy times more."

That's not just hard — that's just crazy to even comprehend.

So when they cry out, "Increase our faith!" it's not abstract theology — it's a plea from people who see the gap between what Jesus asks and what they feel capable of giving. They want enough faith to cross that gap. And who among us doesn't know that feeling?

But Jesus, always resisting an easy way out, says, *"If you had faith the size of a mustard seed..."* — not to shame them, but to shift their focus. He's saying: it's not about quantity. You don't need **more** faith. You need to **use** the faith you already have.

And maybe that's the part we miss. Because faith, in the language of the Gospel, isn't about believing harder — it's about living differently. The Greek word Jesus uses here is *pistis* — not

belief in the sense of intellectual agreement, but embodied trust, fidelity, steadfastness. It's relational. It's lived.

So when we "live" our faith — not just think it, or talk about it — something in us changes. Belief might live in the head, but faith lives in motion. Faith is what reshapes us, slowly, from the inside out. It's not the thing that gets us to God — maybe it's the thing God uses to get to us

Faith isn't a thing to measure, or to compare — it's about living it. It's the habit of showing up when the world makes no sense. It's doing what love requires just because we are loved. It's planting mustard seeds and trusting something will grow, even if you may never see it bloom.

You know, prophets aren't superheroes. They're ordinary people who refuse to close their eyes. They live as though God's vision is real — even if it takes it's time getting here. And they are not afraid to speak God's word as they live it in their everyday going about in the world.

We can be prophets too — each in our way. When we stay alert to beauty. When we choose compassion over comfort. When we stay awake to the world moving around us and when we name what we see.

That's mustard-seed faith.

That's watchtower faith.

That's the Timothy spark rekindling in us.

And if we're staying alert and aware, we might start to sense what Dylan saw coming in that final verse: *"Outside in the cold distance a wildcat did growl, two riders were approaching, the wind began to howl."*

It's the sound of change on the horizon. You can't quite see it, but you can feel it — that ominous, holy rumble, when something new is about to break in. It's a nudge to ask, *"Where in my life is God inviting me to wake up — to move from thinking about faith to actually living it?"*

Because maybe that's what prophets do — they remind us that the hour's getting late, not to frighten us, but to wake us to the life that's still unfolding — to the grace that's already here.

That's the prophet's hope: not certainty, but awareness. The conviction that God is not finished with this world yet. God is not finished with us yet. That even in the confusion, even in the waiting, the Spirit is stirring, the wind is shifting, and mercy is on the move.

So maybe the call today isn't to muster bigger faith, but to wake up the seed of faith already planted within. To let it move our feet, soften our hearts, open our eyes. To stand alert, grounded in love. To believe, even now, that the vision will come. That justice will rise. That grace will outlast fear.

Because it will. It always does.

The wind is already howling.

So climb your tower.

Keep watch.

And let the Spirit rekindle your flame.

Amen.