

**Date: June 17, 2018 (Father's Day)**

**Scripture: Mark 4:26-34**

**Title: GOD LOVES LITTLE THINGS**

I understand President Ronald Reagan used to tell a story about a very timid little man who ventured into a biker bar. The little man cleared his throat nervously and asked, "Which of you gentlemen owns a black Pit Bull which is chained outside to a parking meter?" A giant of a man, wearing biker gear, turned slowly on his stool, looked down at the quivering little man and snarled, "It's my dog. Why?" Obviously very nervous, the little man squeaked "Well, sir, I believe my dog just killed your Pit Bull."

The big man roared in disbelief, "What? What kind of dog do you have?" The little man answered nervously, "It's a small Pekinese." The biker roared, "That's ridiculous! How could your Pekinese kill my Pit Bull?" The little man, swallowing hard, said, "It appears it got caught in his throat."

Our theme for today is the power of little things.

Jesus once compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. He called the mustard seed the tiniest seed on earth. But when the mustard see grows up, he added, it is taller than any of the other plants in the garden, with branches so large that the birds of the air can make their nests in its shade.

On another occasion, he used the tiny mustard seed in another context. He told his disciples, that if they had as much faith as a grain of mustard seed, they could say to a sycamore tree, "Pluck yourself up by the roots and plant yourself in the sea and it would obey." (Luke 17:6) Obviously there's more power to even a little bit of faith than you or I may have ever imagined. The power of little things.

It's interesting. The gospel itself, is a rather unique celebration, of the seemingly small and insignificant.

Bethlehem was a small town. Nazareth was too. Calvary was a tiny spot on the globe. There was nothing particularly significant about the profession of carpenter or fisherman or tax-collector. None of the disciples or even Jesus himself held positions of power and significance. The tiny mustard seed, called the church, that was planted 2,000 years ago showed little promise at the time, but today, of the 7½ billion people on earth, 1 out of 3 bear the name Christian.

Don't ignore the power of little things. Someone has said the sweetest music comes only from the smaller birds. As a matter of fact, the smaller birds are the only ones who really sing. You don't hear many beautiful notes from turkeys, or ostriches or eagles. But you do hear beautiful music from canaries, wrens and larks.

When we think of the power of small things, Bible scholar William Barclay once proposed a theory about how Jesus fed the 5,000. He said that most of the people going even on a short excursion would carry a small amount of food with them just in case

they were delayed. This crowd stayed around for hours listening to Jesus teach. They were hungry. There was no way the disciples thought there could be enough food to feed such a mob. But there was a lad who had with him five small barley loaves and two small fish. It might have been a lunch his mother handed him to take with him when he began his journey. It was just a small amount of food. But when he offered to share what he had, says Barclay, others did the same and before long the whole multitude was sharing the small amounts of food they had brought with them, and the food simply multiplied. (John 6:1-14) A little offered to Jesus goes a long way.

Don't ignore the power of little things. Don't ignore the power of a solitary voice to change the world. We should never lose sight of the ability of one committed individual to make a difference in the world.

Some unknown author has written a little poem titled *The Impact of One*:

One song can spark a moment, One flower can wake the dream.

One tree can start a forest, One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship, One handclasp lifts a soul.

One star can guide a ship at sea, One word can frame the goal.

One vote can change a nation, One sunbeam lights a room.

One candle wipes out darkness, One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey, One word must start each prayer.

One hope will raise our spirits, One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom, One heart can know what's true.

One life can make the difference, And may that one be you, and me, too!

**Little things can make a big contribution to achieving a successful outcome in any undertaking.**

There was an interesting story on the ESPN website about the late Hall of Fame basketball coach at UCLA, John Wooden. Some of you are probably aware that Wooden was a stickler for getting little things right. For example, according to this story, players gathering for the first day of basketball practice at UCLA were full of anticipation. They wondered how their coach, John Wooden, would set the tone for the long season to come. They didn't have to wait long to find out.

Veterans knew what was coming. But first year players were no doubt perplexed by the initial lesson imparted by their famous coach: He taught them how to put on a pair of socks. He didn't teach this lesson only once, but before every game and practice. Why?

Wooden discovered many players didn't properly smooth out wrinkles in the socks around their heels and little toes. If left uncorrected, these wrinkles could cause blisters that could hamper their performance at crucial times during games. Many players thought the practice odd and laughed about it. Wooden knew some of them laughed about it, but he wouldn't compromise on this basic fundamental principle. He

contended: “I stuck to it. I believed in that, and I insisted on it.” Wooden never left anything to chance. And neither should we.

Little things can make a big contribution to achieving a successful outcome in any undertaking. Conversely, the neglect of little things can doom even the most ambitious undertaking. A tragic illustration of the crucial importance of little things was furnished a few years ago by the crash of a jet airliner shortly after takeoff. All ninety-five persons aboard were killed. An exhaustive study of the disaster concluded that it might have been caused by the loss of a little bolt, less than an inch long, in the rudder-control system. For want of a bolt, so many lives were lost.

Most of us remember when the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded. This tragic event occurred because a fifteen-cent rubber part didn’t function in unusually cold weather. Several brilliant scientists were killed and a multi-billion-dollar program was jeopardized, because this one tiny detail was overlooked. One little detail overlooked, can make the difference in success and failure, in almost any venture.

Successful people are aware of details, including the little things.

**Maybe you feel like a little thing, a person of little consequence.** I have some good news for you. Put your life in God’s hands, and you can do great things. Notice when Jesus spoke of the mustard seed, he was explaining the kingdom of God. How does the kingdom come? One person at a time, through people who are willing to give to God, whatever small gift they might have. But here’s the secret of the mustard seed: whatever you place in God’s hands will be multiplied many times over. That truth has been revealed time and time again.

On May 12, 1807, a man named Robert Morrison boarded a ship in New York, on his way to China, where he would become the first Protestant missionary in that great land. After 113 days at sea, Morrison arrived in Macao, on the southern coast of China. Seven years later he baptized his first convert. He served for 27 years as a missionary in China, dying at the age of 52. It’s said that on his voyage to China, when someone disrespectfully asked, if he expected to convert China, he replied, “No, but I expect God will.”

When he finally baptized his first convert, he wrote these words in his journal: “May he be the first fruits of a great harvest, one of millions who shall come and be saved on the day of wrath to come.”

God gave Robert Morrison faith, to see beyond his meager beginning, to a day when a vast multitude of Chinese would follow Christ. On that day, no one would have believed it possible. You do the math. If it took seven years for the first convert, it would take seventy years for ten converts. It was a pipedream to talk of “millions” of Chinese coming to Christ.

Morrison, like so many heroes of the faith, died without ever seeing his dream come true. At his death, it would be fair to say, that evangelical Christianity had

established a tiny toehold along the coast of China . . . Today, it's estimated that the church in China numbers 130 million. It's the most amazing story of church growth in the last 100 years. Today in China, there are more Christians than members of the Communist Party. But it began with a few solitary missionaries, like Robert Morrison, who trusted their lives and their ministries to God.

Has God given you some gift, you can place in His hands, to watch God multiply that gift many times over? It may take some time. It took Robert Morrison 7 years to see his first convert. That's the thing about seeds. For some time, they may show no promise at all, but suddenly they start to sprout and, lo and behold, before long, there's a giant bush or tree. God loves little things, that He can use to His glory, little things like you and me. So let us Trust, Believe, and have an Active Faith in God making disciples of Jesus Christ in the transformation of the world. Amen.