

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

Today we are going to talk about small things. We're just a small church, and perhaps we can tend to feel a little bad or inferior about that. But we don't need to really, when we see verses like:

Luke 12:32 (NIV) "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

It would be good to be bigger – there is nothing wrong with big churches – and we do pray that God will add to us, but in the meantime verses like this can be very encouraging, because that is what Jesus said. In fact, He often spoke about the Kingdom of God in terms of small things. For instance:

Matthew 13:31-32 ³¹ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

Then the next verse (v 33) gives another example of a small thing that works wonders:

³³ He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."

That's how God likes to work – through small things, even hidden things. You can't see the leaven working in the dough – it all happens behind the scenes, but the transformation is amazing.

That's how God works in our lives, and in the Church. That's how the Kingdom advances, according to Jesus – not usually in a spectacular way. In another parable, Jesus said God is like a shepherd who goes after one lost sheep, even though there are 99 safe sheep in the flock. He hammered that lesson home by repeating it again in a different parable:

Luke 15:8-10 ⁸ "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Just one person is valuable to God! We tend to want to see things done in huge numbers and awesome displays of power. But every single one of us is valued by God, one by one.

That's what Jesus showed in Matthew 18:20 ^{For} where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." The Church doesn't have to be huge to be God's Church. In fact, the way church was done in the New Testament was in small groups meeting in houses.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 ²⁶ Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before Him."

God works through small things! Here are some Bible examples:

The five small barley loaves and two small fish that God used to feed the 5,000.

When Saul was small in his eyes he became the King of Israel. Similarly with David; just a small boy when he defeated Goliath.

Israel was a small nation amongst the others, yet God worked through them.

Gideon reduced his army to a small group of 300 who defeated a great host.

A poor widow baked a small cake for Elijah and as a result her food supply never ran out.

God revealed Himself to Elijah in a still, small voice, through a cloud as small as a man's hand.

Jesus had a small beginning when He came to earth: a small baby, born in a small town, in a small manger.

He said if we have faith as small as a mustard seed, we could move mountains.

In Daniel a small rock broke a huge image, representing the coming of God's Kingdom.

James talks about how the tiny tongue can make such a big difference, like a match starting a forest fire, or a tiny tiller moving a big ship.

We need to become like small children, and not offend the little ones.

"You have been faithful with a few things – I'll put you in charge of many things."

And I haven't even mentioned the widow's mite – a small offering made a huge difference.

Isn't it amazing how many times in the Bible we see the principle that small things mean a lot to God!

Now let's look in more detail at another example—the way we can learn big lessons from some small creatures in the world around us!

Proverbs 30:24-28 ²⁴ "Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: ²⁵ **Ants** are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer; ²⁶ **hyraxes** are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the crags; ²⁷ **locusts** have no king, yet they advance together in ranks; ²⁸ a **lizard** can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in kings' palaces.

Ants (Prov 30:25) We can learn so much from ants.

Proverbs 6:6-8 ⁶ "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! ⁷ It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, ⁸ yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest."

Isn't it amazing to watch ants—they're always busy!

v. 6: Don't be a sluggard: work hard!

v. 7: Don't have to be bossed around – be a self starter.

v. 8: Ants plan ahead.

Hyraxes (Prov 30:26) are a "species of small mammals about the size of small rabbits." Shy creatures that live in rock crevices. Once they are in their holes in the rock, it is hard to catch them – like when a crab scurries under a rock for safety.

That's a picture of how when we are in trouble we should run for the rock – Jesus – and seek refuge in Him. He is our rock and our high tower, the first place we should go for protection.

Locusts (Prov 30:27) Again very small, but very smart creatures. A plague of locusts can cause tremendous destruction – all working together in harmony and unity.

Lizard (Prov 30:28), also translated “spider”. Geckos can climb onto the highest ceilings and spiders spin their webs in all sorts of places. They seem so small and weak, yet they can get into places we wouldn’t have a hope of getting into – e.g. King’s palaces.

We can learn lessons from small things. There are advantages of being a small church. We can know one another and serve one another much more effectively than people in a large church, who might never sit next to the same people again in church, not even know who goes to their church, and names of other members.

The Bible talks of other small creatures we can learn from too.

Matthew 10:29-31 “²⁹ Are not two **sparrows** sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

Sparrows are commonplace, small birds generally considered of little significance, mundane and ordinary. Yet they are important to God – He keeps track of every one of them.

“In 1957 Mao Tse Tung ordered the killing of all sparrows as part of a pest eradication campaign – believing sparrows were ‘enemies of the state’ and responsible for devouring essential and crucial cereal crops. Citizens of China took to beating pots and pans to scare sparrows from landing so that they fell out of the sky exhausted. Incentives were offered to schoolchildren to destroy nests.

It is estimated that by 1962 two billion sparrows were eradicated, and the subsequent ecological imbalance opened the floodgates for the crop-eating insect population to mushroom. Locusts, no longer kept under control by the Chinese sparrows, devoured the crops. The Great Chinese Famine ensued with over 30 billion people dying of starvation. Sparrows had to be imported from Russia to help redress the imbalance!”

So even small sparrows are important, but what God is saying in Matthew 10:31 is that each of us is far more important than many sparrows!

If God knows each of the hairs on your head, how much more importance does He give to our thoughts and character? He knows and loves each of us very deeply – we are of immense value to Him.

What other small creatures are mentioned in the Bible?

Psalms 22:6 “But I am a **worm** and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people.” Jesus said that He was a worm. As a human being, and the way He was treated, He emptied Himself of His divinity and became very small – just like a worm. That was His amazing humility. So we should be humble too and realise of ourselves we are nothing – but of course we are supremely important in God’s sight.

Job 25:6 “how much less a mortal, who is but a **maggot**—a human being, who is only a worm!” Does this help you feel better about yourself? Talking about small things – we are compared to maggots!

That’s if you compare us to God. He is HUGE AND GREAT – yet He works through the smallest of things, and is willing to take us maggots and worms into covenant and communion with Him, and to live with us forever!

Worms are pretty small and insignificant, but are vitally important in producing good soil. Maggots must have a purpose too!

Bees are small too, but so important. If it wasn’t for these tiny creatures, flowers wouldn’t be pollinated, causing a fatal lack of fruit and vegetables.

One type of worm is a **glow worm**. Have you ever seen them in the wild? Matthew 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” The tiny glow worms stun us with their brilliance, like twinkling diamonds lighting up the darkness with clear white light.

Another little creature we can learn from is, believe it or not, the irritating house fly. “**Flies** may be a nuisance but bug expert Ruud Kleinpaste reckons they are merely misunderstood. ‘We might not welcome them into our home but we can’t live without them.’ Kleinpaste says flies are essential for maintaining environmental equilibrium. New Zealand is home to hundreds of different species, including up to 60 kinds of blow fly and Kleinpaste says every one of them has a vital job. ‘All blow flies do is clean up carcasses, dung, waste and organic material,’ he says. ‘The house fly loves grass clippings and does a fabulous job with composting. The lesser house fly is the one that flies incessantly around the lounge. They are experts in bird dung.’ (*North Shore Times*, Feb 19, 2015)

That brings us to the **dung beetle**. John Halford wrote an article “Blessed are the Dung Beetles.” He visited the Kruger National Park in South Africa, where he came across elephants in the wild. “Elephants need to eat three or four hundred pounds of vegetation a day, and they have a ‘throughput’ to match. That is quite a lot of manure, and it presents quite a cleanup problem. That’s where the dung beetles come in. We noticed that some of the piles of dung along the roads were swarming with beetles. These little creatures, about one inch long, specialise in disposal...they use their forelegs to roll the dung into a ball as big as themselves. Then they push, pull and manoeuvre their prize back home, where they eat some of it, give some to their young, and bury the rest. Then they go back for more.

“The life of the low-rollers,” a *New Zealand Herald* article of June 13, 2014, says: “The next time you moan about eating your veggies, spare a thought for this little insect who survives exclusively on a diet of poo. Dung beetles may sound disgusting, but they play a vital role in agriculture. They remove faeces from the fields, recycling it and returning nutrients into the soil. In doing soil they also protect livestock from flies and other insects that live in the dung and lay their eggs in the grazing animals. Dung beetles are being shipped over here and released into the Kiwi countryside to help the few species that have already adapted to our climate...Dung beetles can roll a ball of dung 50 times their own weight, and the male of one species can roll a pooball 1141 times heavier than themselves. That’s like a man pushing six double-decker buses filled with people. It’s fair to say that without these helpful little bugs, we’d be up to our necks in it.”

Little things can do an amazingly important job! They perform a vitally important service. And so small churches and insignificant Christians such as you and I, can take advantage of opportunities to serve, and we can make a difference. God’s work isn’t always glamorous or spectacular, but He can be seen and heard in little acts of humble service. That’s how He gets His work done – one small step at a time. The Kingdom of God grows like a mustard seed – and we are part of that tiny mustard seed.

Zechariah 4:10 “Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel?”

At this time the temple was being rebuilt by Zerubbabel, but it wasn’t anything like the great structure Solomon had built. So many of the people rubbished and despised it, saying it wouldn’t amount to anything. But God says not to despise small things.

He can do great things through small things! When God is in it, a small thing is big!

So let’s not be discouraged and dismayed because we are small. God has an amazing habit of working, time after time after time, through small things, to do His Kingdom Work.

Let’s not despise the day of small things.