

Series: Faith in Act!on
Title: Small Acts Can Make a Big Splash
Text: Luke 13:18–21
Key Word: Drop
Proposition: God uses small things to make big stuff

Good Morning everyone. We're delighted that you have chosen to come and worship God with us today. I invite you to take out the sermon handout and review it with me. We're in the midst of a series of messages entitled: "Faith in Action." As a local church we want to be the Church, for the Church is the hope of the world. As the Church we strive to put our faith into action. I invite you to follow along using the sermon handout to jot down any notes that you wish to take.

I have a pop quiz for you this morning. Let's begin: Which country has the largest population? ([China](#): 1.3 Billion)...What is the world's tallest mountain? ([Mt. Everest](#), 29,029)...Who is the richest man in the world? ([Bill Gates](#))

So far, so good. Now let's try the second half of the quiz. Which country has the smallest population? ([Vatican City](#): 920)...What is the world's smallest mountain? ([Mt. Greylock](#), 3,491 ft)...Who is the world's poorest man? (Jed Matthews owes \$22.4 million and has no assets due to bad investments in an internet company) *Adapted from "Is Bigger Really Better?" by Larry Sarver on sermoncentral.com*

How did you do? I suspect most performed better on the first half. Many recognize, respect and remember those things in life that are big, while others tend to give little thought to the small things.

Many seem to believe “bigger is better.” Many believe this in spiritual matters. They think that more people, money, programs, bigger ministries and buildings, and greater talent will result in big dividends in God’s work. The more grand and marvelous things seem to be, the more that God is at work.

On the other hand if things are small, then God must not be working or God could not be working. It is as if God can not work through small churches and ministries, or through lesser talent, and fewer programs. We think if it isn’t big, God must not be in it.

Unfortunately some believe this about themselves. We may feel like we aren’t big enough, rich enough, talented enough, or important enough for God to use us in any meaningful way. When I was in school I had a few teachers who told me that I was not smart enough to attend college. I earned a Master’s Degree. When I played football, I believed that I was not big enough to play the offensive line. At 175 lbs, I earned honorable mention as a guard in the Southwestern Buckeye league.

But is bigger always better? No, not when it comes to spiritual things. Jesus told his followers two illustrations of how God works in his kingdom.

Luke records these words, *“Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched*

in its branches.”

Again he asked, “What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.” Luke 13:18–21

Jesus asks a question: “What is the kingdom of God like?” Instead of defining it, he told stories and employed metaphors to help people understand and visualize what it was like.

In his first example, Jesus says that God’s working is like a “*mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.*”

The mustard seed is very, very small. The black mustard seed was the smallest seed ever sown by a first-century farmer in that part of the world. Because of its size the mustard seed was used proverbially for anything that was small and insignificant. Today we would say that someone had a “pea brain”; if we lived in Jesus’ time, we would have said they had a “mustard seed brain.”

But even though the mustard seed was small, it grew to be the largest of the herbs grown in that area. It typically grew to be 12 feet—**two feet taller than a basketball goal**. It was big and bushy enough for birds to nest in it.

Next, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to yeast. He said that God’s working is like “*yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour*

until it worked all through the dough.”

As a boy, Jesus undoubtedly had watched his mother make the daily bread. She would have used yeast to make it rise. She wouldn't have used dry yeast used today; rather, it was a very small lump of dough taken from the previous day's making of bread. She would take that lump of dough and knead it in to the new flour mixture and eventually that yeast would permeate and influence the entire batch.

The most important part of this illustration is the amount of flour into which the small amount of yeast was mixed: the amount is lost in the translation from Greek to English. The NIV says, “*a large amount*” but the Greek is more specific and says, three “satas.” Three satas is about **50 pounds of flour**. This will feed 100 people. This was more than daily bread. No housewife had an oven large enough to hold that amount of dough. The very vastness of the dimensions of Jesus' story shows us that he was not describing an ordinary household baking situation. Even though the original ball of yeast was small, it would have a huge influence.

So what was the point of these examples? Jesus was revealing a kingdom truth. When it comes to spiritual things, **God uses small things to do BIG stuff.**

When God wanted to create a new nation to call his own, he didn't start with a large, established family. Instead, he used a nomadic man and woman too old to conceive children. When God wanted to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt,

he used a fugitive living as a shepherd. When God wanted a king to represent his people, his choice wasn't a big shot, but a shepherd boy. When Jesus wanted to feed 5,000 people, he used a small boy's sack lunch to do it. **God uses small things to do BIG stuff.**

What we might see as too small and insignificant to matter, God sees as something he wants to use to accomplish his purpose. Or maybe you feel too small and insignificant to make a difference. Perfect, The Bible says: *“God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”* (1 Corinthians 1:27–29) **God uses small things to do BIG stuff.**

Few remember the “big lives,” that have made a huge visible impact in the public sphere. Many though remember the “small lives” that made an extraordinary impact in their private lives. Some either abandon or reduce their giving because they don't believe that God could work mightily through something small and insignificant. But God often makes a significant tree out of an insignificant seed. It is just as possible for Him to do the same with you and me.

Who are the last five Heisman trophy winners? (Matt Leinart, Reggie Bush, Troy Smith, Tim Tebow, & Sam Bradford) Who are the last five winners of the Miss America contest? (Deidre Downs, Jennifer Berry, Lauren Nelson, Kristen

Huglund, Katie Stamm) Who are five people who have won a Nobel or Pulitzer prize ?(Noble Peace: Martti Ahtisaari & Noble Prize in Economics: Paul Krugman) (Pulitzer: Walt Bogdanich and Jake Hooker of “The New York Times” & Steven Pearlstein of “The Washington Post”)?

How did you do? The point is none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These were no second-rate achievers. They were the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Now, let me ask you this: Who was a teacher who aided your journey through school? Who was a friend who helped you through a difficult time? Who taught you something worthwhile? Who has made you feel valued or appreciated?

I suspect we can all name someone. It seems to me that the people who make a difference in our life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones who do the little things with a big heart. As Mother Teresa once said, *“We can do no great things; only small things with great love.”*

Every Wednesday a team of people from this church take meals out to shut-ins. Those meals have been prepared by Joe Duncan, Carolyn Royer, Linda Ray, and Dick Leflar to name a few. I suspect that the people who receive this meal know those who deliver their meal by name. But they could not tell you who won

the NCAA basketball tournament or won the Oscar for best actor this year. **God uses small things to do BIG stuff.**

In the September 2006 cover story of “Fast Company” there is a story about light bulbs. We see these light bulbs on the shelves in many stores across America. These \$ 3.00 light bulbs have changed the world. This compact fluorescent light bulb, with a quirky-looking twist of frosted glass is quite the energy saver. Compact fluorescents emit the same light as classic incandescent but use 75 percent or 80 percent less electricity. What that means is that if every one of 110 million American households bought just one ice-cream-cone bulb, took it home, and screwed it in the place of an ordinary 60-watt bulb, the energy saved would be enough to power a city of 1.5 million people. One bulb swapped out, would be enough electricity saved to power all the homes in Delaware and Rhode Island. In terms of oil not burned, or greenhouse gases not exhausted into the atmosphere, one bulb is equivalent to taking 1.3 million cars off the roads. **Source:** Fast Company. “How Many

Light Bulbs Does It Take To Change The World? One. And You’re Looking At It.” Issue 108 | September 2006 | Page 74 | By: Charles Fishman.

Small actions multiplied by many can change the world. So, “What if we all did small things for God?” Like serve in the nursery once a month. Like lead Kidz stuff or All-stars once a quarter. Like invite a friend to church. Like pray for someone who doesn’t know Jesus. Like serve meals to homeless persons at St. Paul’s church in Dayton. We would see God do great things!!!

This past December, we hosted a Christmas Celebration for a local Hispanic

community in Bethel Township called “Golden Acres.” Thirty servants from our church plus another 30 from Troop 586 welcomed and served over 170 Latino brothers and sisters. God made a big splash with our combined drops. Imagine what it would be like, what God could do in loving these neighbors. God could do big things through our small gifts.

Can you imagine the power of many people doing small things and what God can do to multiply the influence? Don’t wait for someone else to start it. I challenge you to jump in. Be the one to start a chain reaction. There is incredible life-changing power when one person grabs hold of the fact that through Jesus Christ one life can make a difference. One life touches a life, touches a life, touches another life, and touches another life. One church can truly make a difference. One church touches its community; one church joining others putting their faith into action is truly amazing. Let’s seize the opportunity today.

Be encouraged you’re not in this alone. Our efforts may seem like a drop in the bucket ... But that’s precisely what we are: a single drop that joins with others to become a mighty river.

God can use “little” you to make a BIG splash! 2065