

Little becomes much in the Master's Hand

Rev. Terrance Jacob on Matt. 13:31-33 at SALC on 7/26/26

There's a song by Danniebell Hall called *Ordinary People*:

Just ordinary people
God uses ordinary people
He chooses people just like me and you
Who are willing to do as He commands
God uses people that will give Him all
No matter how small your all may seem to you
Because little becomes much as you place it in the Master's hand

Little becomes much as you place it in the Master's hand
Place it in the Master's hand.

Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

A quarter pound of yeast was needed for 60 pounds of flour – or 3 measures, as it was called. That made 5-6 dozen loaves of bread from that 4 ounces of yeast. You can do the math. If it's wrong, Jesus was not a baker giving bread recipes. He was making a point that this is how the kingdom of God is: It grows from a little to much. The true kingdom of God means that those in it bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and their witness brings others, then those do the same and so on, and so on... and the kingdom keeps growing. The message of the kingdom cannot be kept quiet – it will not be quietened, in spite of us.

Jesus is saying to his little band of disciples that the Kingdom of God, as they see it now in his person and work, may be small - but it will grow.

The parable of the mustard seed being planted in the field and growing into a tree has the same message. Jesus was saying that the smallest

seed used by farmers in that part of the world at that time - in this little speck in the world, will influence the whole world. And so it has and still does. A small band of followers – ordinary people, led by only 12 ordinary people, whom Jesus fed daily by the Word and deeds, empowered by the Holy Spirit - has influenced and continues to influence the world even today through you and me.

Sisters and Brothers, we are not to despise little beginnings. Don't despise what might look insignificant now. Don't downplay simple acts - the simple examples of mission and ministry in your life and in the life of the church.

In the early 90s local churches in Franklin and Brentwood came together to provide social assistance to the community. It was a small initiative that today is GraceWorks, which now has 50+ staff and over 270 volunteers, including some from our church. Around the time GraceWorks was established, St. Andrews also went into another chapter of growth because of the witness outside the walls – I'll let you can read that on our website and archives. It's not really about us. Little becomes much when placed in the Master's hand – meaning "when we act according to God's will and command, we see growth and fruit."

Besides institutions and movements, there are stories of people rising up to positions of power and significance from very humble beginnings. We marvel at these stories. I know many bishops who had very small beginnings. We know many presidents who had small beginnings. But because we are in election season with all its nastiness, I am not going to tell stories about presidents due to party affiliations. Let's stick to church leaders.

A bishop I know, was once no academic or great church leader. He grew up in poverty and just loved to study the bible. He tells the story of how his pastor told him that he should consider joining a lay

academy for biblical teaching in the ELCA. That led to him being nudged to go to seminary by his bishop. When he completed the TEEM program, he was asked to start a small church amongst Spanish-speaking people, which struggled along in that poor community. After a few years, he was without a call for various reasons, especially funding related, and he had to take on some interim and part-time calls. He then planned to retire, but, as God would have it, he was elected Bishop in his late 60s and proved to be exactly the leader his synod needed for that particular time. Many referenced the words of Mordechai about Queen Esther's calling from oppression to being queen: "called for such a time as this!"

That song by Danniebell Hall: "Just ordinary people, God uses ordinary people, He uses people just like me and you, who are willing to do as He commands." Not perfect people, not sinless people – just willing people. People who will tell the story. That song rings through the hallways of history, whether in church leadership or "simple" everyday disciples. Ordinary people who are willing to do as He commands.

We may not all become bishops – God forbid – or presidents or even well-known influencers of history. God is not looking for us to aspire towards that. God just wants us to be faithful and willing. What does this mean practically, on Monday morning, as they say?

1. Showing a simple act of kindness. A simple act of kindness could change a person's life.

When we show kindness to a stranger, or even someone we know, in God's hands it could change their lives. As we said last week, one of the simple fruits of the spirit, as listed in Paul's Letter to the Galatians (Ch. 5), is kindness. Let's bear that fruit,

2. Another simple act is forgiveness. When we forgive someone who has harmed us in anyway, it could change their life forever.

Love forgives. Love does not bear a grudge says Paul in 1st Cor. 13. Has anyone hurt you? Forgive them and, in God's hands it could change them. We can be sure that it will change our lives. One of the greatest hurts in life is actually self-inflicted. It is unforgiveness and, of course its faithful servant, burning resentment. Someone said resentment is like me drinking the poison and hoping my enemy will die. Forgiveness neutralizes resentment, like an antacid for heartburn.

A simple act of forgiveness could even change a generation. Since I'm not referencing US presidents, let me reference an African. President Mandela forgave his oppressors after 27 years of imprisonment for simply fighting racial oppression in South Africa. After his release and election to the presidency, his acts of forgiveness changed the course of history for the country, and in many ways the world. He invited his jailers to his inauguration, he invited wives and widows of past apartheid presidents to his home for tea.

Yes, a simple act of kindness and forgiveness could change the world. Let's not undersell the simple fruits of the spirit – I'm not going to go through all of them. Undertake to live the Gospel by word and deed in little ways - maybe a simple word of faith or a simple act of love – and by God's Grace it will be a great blessing.

Let me conclude with this: The promise of the modern dream is for greatness. The disciples did not seek greatness but simply to live their faith actively – live their faith out loud! Simple kindness, simple forgiveness, simple encouragement! Then they preached the simple message of Jesus's love and salvation by grace alone. That little became much as it connects with God's great mission to save the world. Now that's an enterprise worth living for – one small act at a time! Amen.