

“Delighting in the Day of Small Things”

I want to give you a great gift for the New Year; one of the greatest secrets you can ever learn about God...

that He delights in “small things”; and He calls us to do the same.

I will take for a text 2 Old Testament prophets who ministered during the days of the reconstruction of the Temple at Jerusalem...

I. Introduction

A. Context

1. The people of God have been in captivity in Babylon 70 years; but God has moved the heart of Cyrus, a pagan king to let them go back to Jerusalem, where the Temple was in ruins.

2. The reconstruction of the Temple was overseen by Joshua the Priest and Zerubbabel the Governor.

Haggai 1:14

And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God...

a. When the Church is in a mess, God will fix it!

b. Notice this from the Prophet Zechariah:

Zechariah 4:8-9

Then another message came to me from the Lord: "Zerubbabel is the one who laid the foundation of this Temple, and he will complete it.

3. Here is a powerful prophetic word of encouragement for us right now:

- Today, many of God’s people seem to be in captivity to the world system

- The “Temple” (or the Church) seems to be in ruins; but here’s a word of hope for a new day, a new year, a new beginning...
- **God will build His church!** Joshua, the High Priest, is a “type” or prophetic picture of Jesus our High Priest, who is the one who oversees the construction (Matthew 16:18); Zerubbabel, the Governor, is a prophetic picture or “type” of the Holy Spirit, the One who actually does the work
- The word from God is that Zerubbabel, who has LAID the foundation of the Temple, will COMPLETE it!

4. This should remind us of something the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi:

I am confident of this, that He who has *begun* a good work in you will *complete* it until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6

5. God said Zerubbabel would begin the work and complete it: Paul says God, who begins a work in you will complete it. But the church has a problem. It is the same problem that hindered the Jews who were becoming discouraged at how *small* the new work was. So the Prophet says...

Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work *begin*, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand."
Zechariah 4:8-10 NLT

a. Why did he say, “Despise not these small beginnings?” It is because they WERE despising the day of small things!

b. The people were discouraged because the work was so small and this new Temple seemed inferior to the one that had been destroyed.

6. They did not know that one of the greatest secrets you can ever learn about God is that...

II. God Takes Delight in Small Things

A. I Love to Meditate on the Power of Small Things

“Atomic energy and the atom bomb itself are results of understanding and mastering the smallest things in the universe.”

Frank Laubach, Missionary (1884-1970)

1. This is also true in spiritual things! Think about this: God created man and gave him dominion over the whole earth; but God started him out giving him just one little Garden to tend!

a. But Adam “despised the day of small things”; the devil offered him immediate dominion and they fell into sin.

2. Later, God desired to have a great nation to serve Him; but He did not create it at once; He called one man who was 75 years old and childless! God promised Abraham he would become a great nation. But he was 75 years old and childless!

a. Then when the promised child was delayed, Abraham despised the day of small things; he rushed ahead of God and produced an Ishmael!

3. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth as a “small thing”; a mere infant!

It has ever been God's plan to work from apparently small beginnings; had He chosen He could have commanded great things at once into existence, but He has said, "A little one shall become a thousand," etc. (Isa 60:22). The great Savior came into the world as a weak babe: His great kingdom commenced with twelve men, most of whom were unlearned.

Matthew Henry

a. For 30 years he served his father Joseph in a carpenter’s shop

b. When He started His church, He chose just 12 members; later He called them His “little flock”.

Fear not, *little flock*, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

Luke 12:32

4. And how did He describe His great Kingdom?

Matthew 13:31-32

31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

a. The Kingdom of God is the greatest thing in the Universe; yet He likened it to a "seed"; and not just *any* seed; a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds!

b. Then He gives another comparison...

Matthew 13:33

33 Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures* of meal till it was all leavened."

c. Notice the Kingdom is like the mustard seed/the smallest of all seeds; it's like leaven/just a small pinch can affect the huge lump of dough!

5. And how does He describe the power of our faith?

Matthew 17:20

...for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

a. Why do we despise the littleness of our faith and see ourselves as so powerless? Because we fail to realize that just a *small faith* in God *can move mountains!*

6. And why do we consider ourselves so poor and desperate when our financial resources seem so small in the face of our great needs?

a. When Jesus was confronted with the needs of 5,000 hungry people, His disciples were dismayed...

John 6

4 Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. 5 Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" 6 But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."

8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 **"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?"**

a. How true today! We look at the world; the great need and what seems to be our so little supply; "what are we among so many?"

b. Jesus never answered the question! He just took the little boy's small lunch and fed the 5000!

c. This is why our whining never works; He loves the small things we despise! Like our stewardship of small things...

B. Do We Despise the Small Things of Stewardship?

1. The Bible says everything belongs to God. All that we have is really His. The things we have He gives to us as a *stewardship*. So He starts us off small and then watches what we do with it.

2. But many believers despise the small things; we pray for great things; more money, big crowds; but we overlook how Jesus judges us:

Luke 16:10

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."

a. Notice that the Lord judges our faithfulness not in the BIG things but in how we handle the "little things"!

b. And I cannot resist the next verse, which proves that He was also talking about how we handle our money!

Luke 16:11

"If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"

c. Money is a "big thing" to us! But it's a "very little thing" to Jesus! My translation: If God cannot trust me to pay my tithe and give an offering, how can He trust me with "true riches"? I believe the "true riches" are

*Confession: Before I ever promoted anyone in the Church into any position of spiritual authority or responsibility, I checked out this one thing...is he faithful in the little thing? If a man was not supporting the Church with tithes and offerings, how could I expect him to be faithful if I entrusted him with spiritual authority over others?

*2nd Confession: Many times people have told me that they will tithe once they get their debts settled or their bills paid; I always assure them that they will not.

It says on our money, "In God We Trust": but God says, "Can I Trust You on Your Money?"

d. If you can't tithe \$10 on your \$100 a week how can God trust you to tithe \$1000 if He gave you \$10,000 a week?

e. Jesus said that money is a "very little thing" to Him; and some people despise Preachers talking about money. But money is the very "little thing" Jesus says He is judging us on!

Mark 12:41

Now Jesus sat near the collection box to observe how the people put money into the treasury...

(Imagine Jesus is still doing this today!)

- Notice: Not just what they gave, but how they gave it. God loves a cheerful giver; but He will accept from a grouch!

Mark 12:42

And many *who were* rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two small copper coins...

f. Notice: there were some big offerings given that day; but it is the smallest offering that we're still talking about 2000 years later!!!

Mark 12:43-44

Truly I say to you this poor widow put in more than all...for she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.

Mark 12:43-33

g. She could have made many excuses: I need the money more than the church; this money is so small it won't make a difference whether I give it or not, etc. But she was faithful in a little; and the Son of God noticed!

She gave God 2 cents that lasted a moment; but God gave her 2 verses in His Word, which will last forever!

h. How many pass up the chance to give in an offering because they despise the size of their gift?

- How many young people despise their menial summer job at McDonald's instead of delighting in it as an opportunity to prove God's promise to promote those who are faithful? (If you're going to make a burger, please make it a good one!)
- And how many *older* people fail to realize that God keeps us alive because He's not through with us?
- The little things you do still count! It's what they call...

C. The Butterfly Effect

1. Meteorologist Edward Lorenz is credited with the discovery of what's known as "The Butterfly Effect":

The Butterfly Effect

A butterfly moving its wings can cause big weather changes in distant locations!

2. You never know what one small thing may change a nation!

a. I love the story of the great **Nelson Mandela** emerged from 26 years in a South African prison with a message of forgiveness and reconciliation and led his nation out of apartheid. When asked how he escaped from the depths of poverty to become a national hero, Mandela credited one act of kindness as changing his life forever. When he was a boy in rags, playing on the street, an Anglican Bishop named Desmond Tutu interrupted his walk for a few seconds to greet him and then he tipped his hat. Mandela said that moment changed him forever and gave him a role model for his life!

b. I think of Mother Teresa, (1910-1997), the Roman Catholic nun who gave her life to ministering to the lepers and the poor people of India until she died at age 87; when asked her secret of how she did such great things she said...

“Be faithful in small things, for in them your strength lies.”

Mother Teresa

3. Why do we so love the stories of men and women who start from nothing and go on to do great things or movies about little people who make a big difference?

Frank Capra

Frank Capra, who directed *It's a Wonderful Life*, was asked years ago about the central message of his classic film. Capra responded, "I believe the real message of *It's a Wonderful Life* is this: that under the sun, nothing is insignificant to God."

4. Every life counts; and every moment matters!

“We forget that every good that is worth possessing must be paid for in small strokes of daily effort. Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.”

William James (the “Father of American Psychology”)

III. Conclusion:

A. Warning: Despise Not Small Things

1. I found this by one of the Old Puritan writers:

“We despise little things, and think them beneath us. Our thoughts and measurements are so different from God's thoughts and measurements. And this results from pride, which makes us think so many things beneath us, not worthy of care and of finish. It arises also from a certain ignorance of the value of little things.”

The Biblical Illustrator

2. Life is made up of little things....

**If you don't pay attention to small matters, you will gradually ruin yourself.
Sirach (Ecclesiasticus 19:2)**

B. Promise: If We Delight Ourselves in Small Things God Will Take Care of the Big Things!

1. The big things of our destiny will come out of the small things of our daily faithfulness.

2. The small thing God has begun in us He will complete.

a. Whoever you are; whatever you have; wherever you are; rejoice!

**He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the Day of Christ
Jesus.
Philippians 1:6**

3. Right now you may feel like a “small thing”; or like the work He’s done in you is a little work; but tell yourself this...

God’s not finished with me yet!

PRAYER