

Sermon, July 26, 2020

Psalm 119:29-39 & Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

**“Seeds: Growing in Grace:
The Smallest Things Change the World”**

By Rev. Dr. Brian Jones



On May 31, 1970, there was an earthquake in Peru. Now, that's not all that surprising. Peru, given its' geological features, has earthquakes from time to time. And as earthquakes go, it wasn't a particularly catastrophic earthquake. It was sizable, but they have had worse ones.

But something was about to happen that no one had foreseen. And it started out so small. In fact, the earthquake actually occurred, the epicenter was 21 miles out in the ocean from Peru. Again, tremors, but nothing they hadn't felt before. But as the tremor went through the mountains, it began to move the earth, ice, and snow. Snow and rain had ensured the ice and snow to be at a precarious position. The

earthquake, that shaking, destabilized the entire Northern walls of Mount Huascarán, caused the snow and ice and earth to let go from the mountain and hurtle downward.

It was an avalanche. A large chunk of ice and snow almost 3,000 feet wide and just short of a mile long at a speed of 174 to 208 miles per hour. The avalanche, as it hit the towns below, took the lives of 20,000 people.

It's hard for me to get my mind around the devastating loss of life that began with such a small thing. An earthquake out in the ocean caused tremors creating an avalanche that takes the lives of 20,000 people. Something so small changed so much.

But that's the way it works often, isn't it? Last year, we saw devastating fires in California, one of which caused the evacuation of an entire town. The toll on the forest and the economy, the loss of homes, was staggering. Many believe it all started with one fire, one small fire, they believe perhaps a campfire that got out of control. Fire. A small thing, can change everything. We've seen landslides do the same thing. That last bit of rain, rain that we can hold in our hand, finally loosens up that last bit of earth, and landslides happen.

Sixty million years ago, and yes, scientists debate the age, but this was the best I could research, but sixty million years ago, the tectonic plates shifted. And it caused, I believe, four streams to come together. No big deal, it's just a stream. That stream eventually winds and deepens into the Colorado River, and 60 million years of wear and erosion caused the Grand Canyon. Something so small over time creates one of the great natural wonders of the world.

But I'm not telling you anything new, am I? Look at how a small microscopic virus has changed how we work, our sports, and how we worship, at least, we pray, temporarily. But temporary or not, we all have to admit that something very small has created great changes.

And we could go on. So much so I'm beginning to wonder if the way we look at life might not be a bit backward. We tend to look at the big things in life, the big events, as the ones that are the most life-changing to the world. The flashy, powerful events and the flashy, powerful people. But that might be wrong. In truth, the people, the events we see as being the big flashy influential movers and shakers might not have the effect that some small, seemingly to us, insignificant moments might have. It could be the small things are the ones that create the biggest changes in the world.

I have to believe that's how God planned it. Think how small an apple seed is. Yet, planted, that small seed has within it an untold amount of orchards. How small a grain of wheat is, yet it has within it the potential of millions of wheat fields that from that one seed could feed hundreds of millions of people all

over the world. And it all begins with one small moment of planting a seed. Small things often contain great results.

We've been talking, as you know, over the past several Sundays about planting seeds, how the deeper Christian life is not as automatic as we think it is. That we have to plant seeds that God will use or that God sometimes plants seeds within us that might not seem very important now but will have great impact sometime down the road.

Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in today's Scripture. Jesus describes what the Kingdom of God is like. And He gives us several images here, which makes sense. The Kingdom of God is too great to be encapsulated in one description. But in this passage, the first thing Jesus says is the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, one of the smallest seeds the people had then. But within this small seed lies an entire field of mustard trees. Jesus says this is the Kingdom of God; it might seem small to our eyes, but within it is something incredibly large and life-changing.

I love that verse. What Jesus is saying is that the Kingdom of God does not come, is not shared in some grand, powerful, obvious way. Jesus says the Kingdom of God often comes in the smallest of moments, but when given to God can change the world. Out of four streams comes the Grand Canyon. Out of a movement comes an avalanche. Out of a seed comes a life-bearing orchard. The Kingdom of God comes in the smallest of moments.

I want you to hear that for a couple of reasons this morning. I want you to experience just how grace-filled that idea is. That the greatest movements begin with smallest moments because it means every one of us has a place within God's Kingdom and every one of us changes the world. The world is not going to be changed for God by those who have the most resources, who have the most money. It will not be changed by those who are the most beautiful, the most talented, or charismatic. That's the world's thinking, it's the movers and shakers, the influencers, that change the world. And if that were so, there are so few of us that would feel like we have anything to contribute to the Kingdom.

But in Jesus' Kingdom, Jesus says no, the greatest movement can begin with the smallest of moments. All of us can do a small thing for God. All of us can do a small thing for God. That prayer you prayed for someone in the church last night, such a small thing - you didn't even think about it, changed a life. God used that, maybe years from now, to change the world. The child you made sure you stopped and listened to at church, the moment you stopped what you were doing at home and listened to the child talk about their day, such a small thing changed that child's life that, in time, God will use that child to change the world for Him. A small note card, a phone call so small might be the thing that brings someone away from

the brink of depression or despair. One encouraging word can start a person back from the demons of addiction. And all of us can do a small thing.

Secondly, Jesus is saying to us never pass up an opportunity to do something small for someone. Don't wait for the big splashy moments in life, the moments that get us noticed or that seem significant, because those are not the moments God uses. Never pass up a small moment to do an act of kindness for someone. Never pass up a moment to enact a small moment of grace. Why? Because the smallest moment can cause the greatest movement. A small act of kindness can be an avalanche that changes everything.

Thirdly, it allows us to enjoy a results-free life. So often we are afraid to do things for God, anything, even a small thing, if we can't figure out what the results are. Jesus says *don't worry about it. It doesn't matter if you see any results, because small things take time to change the world.* That's not our job or our responsibility. That type of thinking takes the joy out of Kingdom - living. All Jesus asks of us is to take every opportunity we have to do a small act of kindness, a small moment of grace, a small act of love for someone. The results are His. But when we plant a seed, God will be faithful.

I see a lot of slogans talking about dreaming big. I think it's the wrong tact. I want to invite you to dream small. Dream of small things you can do to share the love of Christ. Because out of the smallest moments can come the greatest movements. Amen.