

## Little Things Matter

### *Luke 13:18-21*

\*\* 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 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 about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

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I want to start this message with a little test to see how observant you are.

\*\* show video - [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>] 1:05

Surprising, isn't it? Ok, I'll give you another chance - I found an updated version of this same test done by the same people; so let's see if we can do any better...

\*\* video 2 [[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK\\_ZfY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY)] 1:26

Chances are they got you again, right?

\*\* These videos, for one thing, illustrate why it is that so many drivers don't see motorcycles on the highway – but that's not why I'm showing them to you today.

The short Scripture we just read consists of two very to-the-point parables that Jesus told about the Kingdom of Heaven. A parable is a method of teaching that Jesus often used. Its an illustration that is kind of like an 'object lesson' – Jesus would take something that was familiar to everybody in that day, and from that he would describe some aspect of life in the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is like *this*... it's like a woman searching for a lost coin, or it's like a garden that gets weeds in it...

\*\*In this case, the point of both of these parables is very similar, and the 'objects' are also similar – in the first one the 'object lesson' is a *mustard seed*. This is

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something *very small* that ends up becoming something quite large – a shrub that in the Holy Land, I read, is something like the kudzu vines in the southern US - they go crazy, and take over, they're everywhere! (Even where they're not always wanted!)

So, Jesus is using this simple mental image: sometime very tiny can have a tremendous effect in the world. Don't count it out because it seems small and even 'worthless' to us right now.

\*\*The second object lesson is *yeast*. A woman is going to make bread, so she takes a little yeast, mixes it in with about 60 lbs. of flour (she is apparently going to make a *lot* of bread!) Now, I don't know a lot about yeast, but do know this - yeast is what makes (among other uses) bread 'rise'. Without yeast we have a kind of flat bread...or, a wafer. (Like, the Passover matzo - made without yeast.) I also know this - it doesn't take much yeast to make a difference in baking, because yeast *grows*. It multiplies and spreads. Like that mustard plant, it takes over!

So, we see that the point of the yeast parable is pretty much the same as the point of the mustard seed. Seemingly little things... things that we might deem unimportant, insignificant...cast away type stuff... these things can ultimately turn out to be much different - more important - than we would have guessed.

\*\*We might sum this up with three words: **Little Things Matter**. (Now, obviously, that is not *a/ways* true! Some little things can be overlooked - and probably should be! And, in fact, that would help a lot of relationships and marriages, wouldn't it? Just to be able to say occasionally, "Let's just let this one go! It doesn't matter") But there are other categories of things in our lives, places where the little things eventually turn out to be 'big things'. For good or bad. And they actually matter a lot!

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That 'gorilla' that we keep missing might end up eating us! That person that walked away in the second video? Maybe we were the only hope they had? But we just didn't notice them ... hmmm.

Some 'little things' that matter are harmful things that we let build up in our lives. It's interesting that (while it's not used in this way here) most of the time, yeast in Scripture is a symbol of *evil*. It represents stuff that we should get rid of, things that we should take out of our lives, but for whatever reason, we don't. And it grows. So, yeast often symbolizes bad things that we tolerate. We justify tolerating them because we've convinced ourselves that 'it's no big deal', but, really, it is. It matters.

Think about this...Have you ever told a lie? (You don't need to answer that!) Because, I know - we all have - in one way or other. By exaggerating, by sharing information that just 'happens' to have left out something kind of important, or by telling an out and out falsehood.

Did you know that Jesus said that the Devil is "the father of lies"? So, if we lie, we're pleasing - the father of lies, we're making him happy. Do we want to do that? I think not!

\*\*A Christian writer, **Dallas Willard**, states: "Almost all evil deeds and intents are begun with the thought that they can be hidden by deceit." We think we can hide what we're doing, what we're choosing, because it doesn't really matter, we'll get away with this, so we can do it, even though its kind of shady. But - we're usually wrong about that - in the bigger picture, it does matter. The kingdom of evil is built on lies, secrets, and darkness. But God's Kingdom is built on truth and light.

Something might seem like a little thing to us now, it might seem that we're getting away with it, but in the end, it matters. I mentioned telling the truth, but there's also the way we treat people - especially when we choose to respect

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someone because we know that this is the way Jesus would want us to treat them; that *matters!* It can make an amazing difference in a person's life for someone to see Jesus in them.

\*\* This is an interesting day, in that a lot of things are coming together today. Today is Pentecost Sunday, for one thing. This is the day that we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit into the early church. From that first Pentecost on, Christians lived with the presence of God in them through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us a conscience, the Spirit gives us power to witness, and to live the life God calls us to live.

That's the reason why we hold our Confirmation services on Pentecost. So at the 11:00 service tomorrow, we'll have 27 kids (and their families) stand before God, and make promises to live for him in the power of the Holy Spirit. Five of those kids will first be baptized... that's more promises. But, we're also receiving new members at a couple of services. Even more promises.

We have two infant baptisms (5:30 and 9:30). The parents of two precious little ones will promise to do everything they can to bring their children into a personal relationship with Christ. In the Confirmation service, new members, and baptism services, everyone in the congregation will respond by affirming our responsibility in helping each other grow in Christ, be nurtured in the faith. And we will renew our promise to serve this church through "our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness".

If all that weren't enough... as you've hearing this is the commitment weekend for our mortgage. (And if you are a member or regular attender in this congregation, you received a letter this week with a card that hopefully, you've brought with you today.) At all our services this weekend we will end by receiving your personal covenants to support the mortgage payments this year, so that we can continue to follow God's lead in the work of this church.

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That's a lot of promises all in one weekend! And here's the thing: for the most part, the accountability in keeping all these promises is totally based on how important your word is to *you*. We aren't going to keep track of any pledges regarding the mortgage. In six months we'll mail these cards back to you - unopened. And it's up to the Confirmation class themselves (yourselves) to decide how important these promises are to you; there's no penalty - from us, for sure - for not keeping them. We're not going to track you down and say, "Hey, what's going on? Where have you been?" (We'll try to help you, but it's hard to keep track that closely!) We've have many people who have had children baptized that we never see again...

But, I would say to you, that **all** these promises are very important. They reveal our character. When we say - "This is where I want to go", and then we follow through, and do it, it says something about the kind of people we are. They may seem like small details in our lives right now... but, *little things matter*.

When we make a decision to follow Jesus, Jesus comes to live with us. And so every decision we make, every word we speak, every act of love (or hate) - everything from slandering someone's reputation to giving them a cup of cold water in Jesus' name... he sees it all.

Jesus said, in Luke 8:17

**\*\*** For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

Do you hear those words? There is *nothing hidden* that is going to stay hidden forever. Everything we do, every word we say, every decision, every thought, whether in public or in private, it is all seen... by our God.

I was thinking about this week and I remembered a little drama that I saw our Youth Group do a number of years ago at a Keswick weekend. I asked Kimberly

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(my daughter) and Brad (our Youth Director) if they would do it for you today.

Here it is: it's called "an unexpected visit"...

\*\* (skit... "*Stay Where I Put You*") 5 min

Let's pray...

Lord, thank you for your Holy Spirit. Thank you for loving us enough to want to be with us every moment of every day, no matter what we give you back in return. But we ask you to forgive us for those times when we mistakenly think that we can simply leave you behind; that whatever it is that we're trying to get away with doesn't matter. Help us to pay attention to those "little things" in our lives that really do matter - especially in keeping the important promises that we're making to you today. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen.