

In Celebration of Smallness

“With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

What seems obvious to me, more and more, is that God really loves to surprise us. It appears that one of God’s favorite activities is to take what is small and seemingly inconsequential to the world and do big and marvelous things with them.

I find this to be very good news in a world that does not always value smallness. In a world that demands so much bigness, we can sometimes find ourselves feeling very, very small. The world in which we live today has some extremely large problems that can seem overwhelming. Feeling small in such a big universe can be quite disheartening.

How can we, in our seeming insignificance, offer anything to a world in need of love and hope?

Well, this is the very same question that confronts Jesus’ early followers. Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God coming near, but if we read those ancient Roman headlines, I doubt that they would have been trumpeting the success of God’s justice and mercy.

People were hungry and oppressed, economic enslavement was the order of the day, and only those of power and wealth seem to have any say in how the world would run. Does any of that sound familiar? But here is Jesus telling us that then and there as well as in the here and now---God’s reality is truly very different.

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This is Jesus’ delightful surprise for us! We are reminded that what is often seen as small and insignificant in the world’s eyes is seen as nothing less than hidden “greatness” by God. I think that if we begin to look at the world through God’s eyes we see evidence of this all around us.

When we align ourselves with God, we are never too small or insignificant to change the world. God can transform our tiniest move toward grace and hope into something magnificent. This is God’s way, you see, and this is Jesus’ great word to us this coming Sunday. In the kingdom of God, great things like justice, mercy, and redemption grow from the smallest of seeds.

I, for one, find myself relieved to know that no matter how big the problems of our big world are, God shows us that the way to hope and freedom can be found in our smallness.

With God’s help, our small acts of faith, small acts of kindness, small moments of hope, and tiny little graces can win the day.

The world’s bigness can be overwhelming, but all we have to do is remember that our world was made and is being redeemed by a God whose grace exceeds our wildest imaginings.¹ God lavishes his gifts of life and growth upon us and constantly does so in the most surprising ways.

After all, Jesus was perhaps the smallest seed and greatest surprise of all. To the casual observer he was just an unimportant man with a small life coming from a small town in a small country.

But now we know that the gift of his seemingly insignificant life grew into nothing less than new hope and new life in God—for all. We are just a small parish, in a small town, with great hope. Our smallness is nothing to fear. With God, we can be a large unstoppable force for love in everything we do. In our worship, fellowship, how we care for one another—we are a small but mighty church that through the power of the Holy Spirit can do big things.

Grace and Peace, Stephanie+

^[1] Lectionary Blog