

The Small Things

November 20, 2022

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled "The Small Things." The scripture reading is First Peter 1:3-7. Thank you to Dave, Debbie and Paul for being part of the video.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Well, good morning, everybody. Happy to see you all this morning on another very, very beautiful day. Enjoying this weird July, November situation. I'm not. No complaints. Would far rather this than shoveling. We have a few announcements as we begin our time together this morning. We also have Jo's birthday this week. So if you are able to give maybe give her a call and let her know that you are thinking of her. We have a few upcoming Great Lakes events. There's an open house and a shadow day coming up in the next couple of weeks. So if you know someone who is of high school or nearly high school age and you want to reach out and they don't already go to Great Lakes. Can't really go to a Shadow Day if you already go to Great Lakes. That'd be kind of weird. But if you know someone who is of that age group, please, please let them know that those things are coming up. And on November 26, the chorus will be singing O Canada for the Ice Dogs game. And there are tickets available to that for that as well, beginning next week. So a week from today, we are going to have an adult Bible class in here on starting at 930 and in between. This is very exciting. In between Sunday School, er, adult Bible class and the beginning of the service at 1030, we're going to have coffee time again. So please go. So please, please make a plan to be here. It, you know, ten after ten, 10:15, something like that. And we'll have a time of fellowship together. Let's let's carry on our time together this morning with a word of prayer. If you'd bow with me.

Lord, it is good to be here with your people and in your presence. We are so blessed to be able to join together like this, to raise our voices in song and turn our thoughts to you all together. Thank you for the time we can spend together. Thank you for the community that you have given us here. And please give us the patience with one another, the strength to build the ties between one another and to help support one another through tough times and to rejoice with one another in good times where we know that there are those among us who are grieving, who are mourning the loss of loved ones. And we ask for your comfort for them, but even more so that we be a comfort to them and be able to support them. We are also thinking of people who are sick or who are caring for those close to them who are sick. And we ask for strength and healing and wisdom in those cases for the caregivers and the health care professionals and to strengthen the people who are suffering. We want to lift lift them up. Before you got as we move into this time of praising you together, we ask that you would be here in our midst and that we would feel your presence as we think on you. It's in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.

Communion

You ever flipped a switch and nothing happened. The power is out. You have your device. The battery is so low or there's no signal. Some of the frustrations that we experience may be pretty minimal, or at least they are inconvenient. It's amazing how these little things common, seemingly mundane things

we do every day when they are interrupted or there's signals connection problems or power failures, we we really take these things for granted. Doing like when you flip a switch that lights would come on or when you push your screen, you expect some results. When it doesn't happen. These small, simple, unassuming, unassuming things frustrate us when they don't work. And yet we have some small, unassuming symbols, emblems that we take around the Lord's table, unfailing. They will always work. They are faith. Dependable, spiritually. Power powered and powerful. The love of God is constant, uninterrupted by outside forces. Reading Romans eight. Who is who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Trouble. Hardship. Persecution. Famine. Nakedness. Danger. Sword. No. None of these things. In all of these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Here I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor demons. These are present or in the future, nor any powers. Neither height, nor depth. Nor anything in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of Christ. And so we gather here this morning and remember, for the love of Christ, that we cannot be separated from. The gift is too great and too large and our God is great.

So, Heavenly Father, we come before you and thank you. We ask that you bless these emblems, the symbols of the body and blood of Christ, and may your peace, which is greater than all of our understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus through whom we pray. Amen.

Reading – 1 Peter 1:3-7

Good morning. The reading this morning is one Peter verses three through seven. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in His great mercy has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who, through faith, are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this, you greatly rejoice, though now, for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Sermon

Thank you, Debbie. If I use the word or the phrase slush fund, do you know what that that is? A slush fund. A slush fund is some kind of extra funds that you have no strings attached. So you can use it. However you want in whatever you where you want. Now, where does anyone know where that phrase came from? If you were a cook in the 17th century on a British sail boat warship, then you would know where it came from. A cook would boil this--this sounds so appetizing--boil big vats of salted meat. And as the meat would boil, the fat would render and come to the top and the cook would scoop the fat off the top, set it aside. It would have some usefulness on the actual ship. Apparently it can be used for waterproofing things and candle making, but it was also valuable and the cook was given permission. It was part of the naval code. He could sell it privately for himself. Hence slush fund. Oh, I forgot to say that. The fat that came up was called slush. So Slush sold it privately. Was able to use it for his own funds. Slush fund. It is amazing how many ordinary words and phrases came out of approximately the 17th century British midshipmen area of sailing. Let me run through a couple here. See if you recognize any of these.

You're all at sea. You're sailing very close to the wind. You'll leave me high and dry. If not, it'll be plain sailing. To some, we give wide berth. To some we push the boat out. To some. Some are loose

cannons. Some are needed to be pressed, gained in the service. Some need a shot across the bow. Some are in full flow and need the wind to be taken out of their sails. Some think that we're just here chewing the fat. Some need to pipe down. Some wonder what is up with our jib. The cut of our jib. I should say. Some are learning the ropes hand over fist. Hard and fast. And I could keep going on. All come from that era of specifically British sailing. Those British sailors in the 17th, 18th and 19th century did not think that their ordinary, everyday terms that they would use just in the course of their day would become so common in the 20th centuries. And some of them some of them are a little dated now, but still you would hear around in many ways, what is considered ordinary is just a point of view, a perspective.

After one family dinner with my parents and my sister after we were all adults, the topic came up of what the most important event of our growing up years were like, most memorable vacation. That kind of thing. My parents were expecting us to say, Well, at one time we all took that one in a lifetime trip out west. I believe it was my Grade eight summer and my family didn't go travel very far and that was the one thing we did. To my parents' surprise, my sister and I both picked what seemed like ordinary, everyday things from their perspective. They were just ordinary, uneventful, but from ours they were special. Perhaps you've had similar experiences. Perhaps there was a special event or moment in your life. But perhaps certain person beside you or your parents or your children just kind of went, Well, that was just normal. Perhaps there someone has given you an offhand compliment that meant so much to you in that moment. I know of a family that when times were very hard, they were in the middle of a conversation about how drastic they had to cut back on their grocery shopping for that week that a fellow church member knocked on their door and gave them a basket of extra vegetables from their garden. The church member had no idea the family was that desperate and they were just sharing from the abundance of their garden. They had extra, so they were sharing it around. But to the family it was a miracle. Sometimes we can discount things that we consider ordinary or small. I don't know if it's the TV or movies or our own pride, but there can be a tendency to discount the ordinary. We can classify our challenges in the ordinary category, and then we censor ourselves about them. Well, these things are just common problems many people have. And I'm not I'm not significant as so. And so what they're going through. So I'm not going to bring it up. I'm not going to ask for prayers. I'm not going to answer honestly when someone says, Hey, how are you doing today? It also works in the positive direction to the simple kind words or actions isn't important enough. This quote unquote simple act probably isn't going to lead to someone's salvation. So it's probably not worth it.

Today we're looking at the fact that God cares about the ordinary and we should, too. Two, uh, two scriptures. We'll start with. Back in Second Kings. If you have your Bibles or read on the screen, go back in the Wayback Machine to before Christ and back in Second Kings. Chapter six Two Little Short Narratives. Both of these are in the context of Elisha, the Prophet, and his company of prophets. The company of prophets said to Elisha, Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to Jordan, to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pool and each of us build a place there for us to meet. And he said, Go. Then one of them said, Won't you please come with your servants? I will. Elisha replied. And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down fruit trees, as one of them was cutting down a tree and iron ax head fell into the into the water. Oh, no, my Lord. He cried out. It was borrowed. The man of God asked, Where did it fall? When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it in there and and made the iron float lifted out, he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it. And from just a couple of chapters before chapter 438 through 41, Elisha

returned to Gilgal and there was a famine in that region. While the company of the Prophets was meeting with him, he said to his servant, put on a large pot and cook some stew for these prophets. One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine and picked as many of the gourds as his garment could hold. When he returned, he cut them up and put them in the pot of stew, though no one knew what they were. The stew was poured out for the men, but as they began to eat it, they cried out, Men of God, there is death in the pot and they could not eat it. Elisha said, Go get some flour. He put it in the pot and said, Serve it to the people to eat and there was nothing harmful in the pot.

Two biblical narratives that might be considered not very important ordinary challenges. In the first, we have a work party and someone's axe head flies off their handle into the river in a place in time when you couldn't just go down to Canadian Tire and get a new one, that's hard enough. But on top of that, it was borrowed. Have you ever broken a borrowed tool? In our half a house in Saskatchewan, we borrowed a jigsaw from a friend. And I don't remember if we actually broke the blade or if we just ran it dull. I don't remember at this point. Anyway, the end result was we had a borrowed tool that no longer worked, and as it turned out, this was an old style and the blades were weird and were a nightmare to find the. And then on top of that, it turns out this person they gave us, they let us borrow this jigsaw that they didn't really need. So I went to all the effort to find the blade, and it wasn't really that important anyway. I still carry around that blade today because I don't know what to do with it now. Elisha sees this ordinary challenge and performs a miracle. The ax head floats the service to the surface of the river and the worker is able to scoop it out. In the second narrative, the company of profits are making dinner, gathering tasty things, refined find to put in the stew. Have you ever experimented with an ingredient that you didn't quite understand before and have it go a little wrong? Probably not like this. They find some sort of gourd that they don't know what it is and it turns out to be poisonous. Now, that text doesn't specifically say it's poisonous, but given the cry of death in the pot ice, I surmise as much. But any case, whether it's actually poisonous or just tastes real bad, it's not good to eat. Elisha sees this supper experiment gone bad and performs another miracle, and they're able to enjoy their stew together.

Both of these events might seem ordinary, but to the worker who lost the ax head and to the guy who went and found the mystery gourds and put them in the stew, they're anything but ordinary. Some might ask why these two events are recorded in Scripture at all. I mean, they're not at least directly part of God's redemptive arc in the history of Israel and Christ. There's only so much room in the text. Why not add a couple extra stories about Jesus? Why have these? Well, I believe these two narratives are here, at least in part, to show us that God cares about what might be considered ordinary. So much so that He is willing to perform miracles for those ordinary things. Do we have challenges in our lives that we might categorize as ordinary? We might discount the difficulty they pose in our lives. We might not choose to bring them up when someone asks how we are or if there's anything we could pray about. I encourage us to bring up our challenges with God today, regardless of whether we think they are big or small because they're big to us. I encourage us to bring our challenges to each other, regardless of whether we think that other person we're talking to might think they're big or small.

Ordinary ministry. First, Peter, now jump back into the New Testament. First, Peter one, we'll do verse one and then we'll jump down to 13 to God's elect exiles scattered through the provinces of Pontus Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, verse 13. Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober. Set your hope on the grace that brought you there to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed

at His coming as obedient children do not conform to the evil desires. Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy, and all you do for it is written. Be holy as I am holy. Since you call on a father who judges each person, each persons work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear for you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect, he was chosen before the creation of the world, and it was revealed in those last times, for your sake, through him, you believe in God who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him. And so your faith and hope are in God now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart, for you have been born again, not a perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God for all people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field, the grass withers and the flowers fail fall. But the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.

Peter here is talking to Christians who are trying to live, quote unquote, ordinary lives. They're living in difficult circumstances, among other Christians who think differently than each other, Jews and Gentiles, and in a culture that is both generally hostile to them, but also specifically these Christians were actually enduring some level of persecution and they were living, trying to live their normal lives in that context. Does that sound familiar to us? More or less. Notice what actions that Peter calls on these Christians to set your hope on the grace of Jesus. Verse 13 Do not conform to evil desires. Verse 14 to be holy 15 and 16, to live in reverent fear of God 17 to remember Christ sacrifice specifically as it applies to meet us versus 18 through 21 and to live and to love deeply. Love each other deeply from the heart. 22. All of these actions that Peter calls these Christians to do are pretty, quote unquote, ordinary. Some might consider small, but they're anything but small. Next Sunday, when I come in and I bump into Dave in the front foyer there and we chat about how the week went, and I say, Well, I successfully set my hope on the grace of Jesus, or I did not conform to the evil desires of the world this week or I. I expressed my love for my brother and sister in Christ deeply. Well, we should just scrap sorry. We should scrap everything we planned for that week. And we should have a celebration that morning. All morning. [Amen!] I'm only kind of kidding. The pressures of our world, whether targeted or just generally like the Christians that Peter was talking to make doing these things incredibly hard. I want to encourage us today that doing these things, what some might consider small Christian things, is not small to God. Notice that Peter ends this section by saying that this is the summary of the message that was preached to them. Christ died for us and in response, our actions are to set our hope in Him, to not conform to evil desires, to be holy, to live in godly fear, to remember Jesus sacrifice, and to live and to love each other. A reminder to us that if we are doing these things, we are following the Gospel. Is there more truth to be found in Scripture for us to follow? Certainly. But you might say that this is the gospel truth of the matter. So from God's perspective, our small Christian efforts are not in fact small. But also, as we start off with, often our small Christian efforts may not be small to those who are around us too.

If I brought up the name St Cuthbert, ring a bell? Are you are you lacking in your midst? Medieval British saints. Oh, sad said. Seventh century before England, before Britain was a thing. They were all separate little kingdoms. And this is when Christianity was beginning to be introduced into the British Isles. So there was a pagan background and Norse gods and blah blah blah and Christianity was starting

to come through st Cuthbert is the patron saint of Northumbria and he was not known for his big acts, but rather he was known for his small acts. That meant a lot to the people who he helped. And because of that he is the patron saint of Northumbria and some would argue should be the patron saint of England. But that's a different thing. That's a touchy subject. Our account, a story that is that is a credit to him. So monks are sailing some monks are sailing across a river on the coastline up near the shores of Northumbria. And a wind strikes up and starts to blow them out to sea. So they're not in a big sailing vessel, ocean going sailing back. You know, they're not equipped to sail across the channel. They're just in a small boat. And some people who happened to be on the shore start to point and laugh at the tragedy for the monks. Cuthbert happens to be there and asks the people on the shore, Why are you laughing? I mean, these monks are in real trouble. The people explain that the monks are taking away their gods because they're not they haven't been converted to Christianity yet. They're still in the other ways and they don't like them because they're being confused and they don't like what they're doing. Cuthbert then prays the winds turn around and bring the monks back to shore, but then he blesses the people who were once laughing and then teaches them.

Perhaps a better example is Mother Teresa. You've probably heard of Mother Teresa, someone who did amazing things, but was but each individual thing she did was just a small act of kindness and healing that amounted to amazing things. Small, ordinary acts of Christian service that we do may in fact turn out to be anything but small and ordinary. Very talked about the fact that God finds them anything but small, regardless of their impact to those around us. But more often than not, I would suggest that our so-called small acts aren't so small because those around us are of the people being affected, but also people watching us do them. Some of the most impactful things in my times in my life that built my faith was when I saw a Christian be kind to another person, show grace. Mercy. And that's sometimes spoke to me more than a lengthy sermon because of that little bit of witness that I saw. Your small act of kindness, grace, mercy, encouragement, speaking truth could actually lead someone to Christ. Even if we can't imagine that path or we actually know about the end of that path. It is amazing though, but God tends to do things in ways we wouldn't expect him to. As I look in my life and my faith journey, much more true is it that I grew because people did small acts of faith building encouragement, kindness with me rather than some big monumental thing? And I wonder if that's true for most of us. So God cares about the small things, both our challenges, what what we might be dealing with, but also our opportunities, what small opportunities we might have. I encourage us Christians today and as a church to also care about the small things this week. May I suggest that we focus on the small, the ordinary, lifting our small and ordinary concerns to God and to others, living our Christian lives in small, ordinary ways and acting in a small and ordinary ways of service for each other. And to those around us. In doing so, we might find that there's great meaning there, that the small and the ordinary become anything but small and ordinary. Thank you.

Closing

Please, please stay standing since you're standing and and I'm going to read Psalm 121 as a benediction for our week. I lift up my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip. He who watches over you will not slumber. Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you. The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun will not harm you by day, nor the

moon at night. The Lord will keep you from harm. He will watch over your life. The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Amen.

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