

*The Little Things Are the Big Things* – Mark 12:38-44

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One morning this past week, I walked into the YMCA to work out. And as those of you who also exercise at the Y know, you need to scan your membership tag when you walk in to confirm you are a Y member.

Working at the front desk was a young man making sure that everybody who scanned in was a member. There were a couple people in front of me when I got there, and by the time I approached the scanner, the young employee (before I scanned my tag) looked at me and said, “Matt?”

I don’t know why he said my name. He would’ve learned it after I scanned; it would’ve popped up on his computer screen. I had come in before when he was working, so maybe he was simply challenging himself to remember names of patrons as they came through the door.

Whatever the reason, him saying my name caused me to take notice and smile. I said, “Yes, thanks.” He smiled and nodded and said “good morning” as I went off to do my thing.

It reinforced for me the significance of being addressed by name. When somebody does it, it signifies that you’re more than just a face. You’re a distinct person, uniquely and wonderfully made.

Now, it does help if you’re calling somebody by their correct name. I like to think of myself as being fairly good at remembering people’s names. But as I get older, it becomes harder. There’s been missteps, of course. I have a problem confusing Kathys with Nancys and Bobs with Johns.

And of course, the worst is calling somebody by their spouse's first spouse's name—for example calling Betty Carol, when Jim divorced Carol fifteen years prior. That's never a good look.

When somebody knows your name and says it, you notice. It's affirmation that somebody has noticed you. It's a small thing, but it holds pretty big meaning.

Small things are small but can be really big.

How many coaches have spent many a team meeting telling his or her players to just do their jobs in order for the team to find success. Each person doing his or her job. It's a small thing but a big thing.

How many bosses have told their employees that one of the most important things you can do, if you're going to work there, is just show up for work on time. Don't be late. It's a small thing, but one that shows respect for fellow employees and the organization that employs them. A small thing, but a big thing.

Admiral William McCraven, former four-star general and Navy seal, wrote a book called, *Make Your Bed*. The premise is that doing small things on a regular basis every day, starting with making one's bed, is the foundation for success in one's life.

A small thing stringed together with other small things that makes for big things.

As people of faith, when it comes to being faithful, it seems as though small things are the right call, too.

Evelyn Underhill once wrote, "Only those who try to live near God and have formed the habit of faithfulness to him in the small things of our daily life, can hope in times of need for that special light which shows us our path."

The small things are the big things.

“God uses small things to accomplish great purposes. He used Moses’ rod to defeat the armies of Egypt. He used David’s sling to overcome the giant Goliath. Gideon and his 300 soldiers used pitchers and torches to slaughter the huge army of the Midianites. Rahab tied a piece of red rope out of her window, and it saved her family. A boy brought a few loaves and fishes to Jesus, and he used them to feed thousands. Never despise the small things because God can use them to accomplish great things.” —Warren Wiersbe, “Big lessons from little things,” Small Church Web Site, [Smallchurch.com](http://Smallchurch.com). Retrieved October 3, 2003.

When the poor widow brought forward the two small coins for the temple treasury, she was already very poor. All her valuable possessions were already gone.

The widow would have not been so poor if her husband had left enough for her, if she had an adult son or father who could support her, or if she had remarried. It looks like the widow did not have a house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or fields—anyone or anything that would have helped her financially.

The coins were her last possessions. They were of little value (small things), but in that act of giving, they were big things (all she had to live on). In her placing them in the treasury, Jesus declares, “she has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.”

Her small things became big acts of faithfulness.

Our theme for stewardship this year has been “Make a Joyful Noise.” And we make a joyful noise not just through our music but through our other words or acts of service that transmit our praise to the Lord.

And in the last couple Sundays, you heard in worship from two members of our congregation who have made a joyful noise with their passion for serving: Laura Hash, who talked of the organization she started several years ago to provide Christmas gifts to foster children, and Mindy Hoolihan, who spoke of her work as a missionary several years ago. Both of those examples would not come off as small things. But whether they are projects like that or placing a commitment card in the offering basket today, we are doing the big things of the kingdom. They make a joyful noise to the Lord as acts of praise and gratitude for the blessings God has gifted us.

I love small things, because small things go a long way. Mindy spoke of this specifically last week: greeting somebody by name, picking up somebody's mail when they're out of town, cooking a meal for somebody coming home from the hospital...These all add up to good neighborliness.

And in the church, small things become big things for the kingdom. Collectively, our commitments to the church's work in 2025 through our gifts will help fund \$80-\$90,000 in mission giving, maintain a dedicated staff and beautiful church facility, and provide programs that bring us together in worship, study, and fellowship.

In today's environment where community continues to be badly needed throughout our society, our gifts tallied together make more options for the people of God to be together and to welcome others to experience the gift of God's grace here.

We realize that sacrificing your hard-earned money for the sake of God's kingdom is NOT a small thing. In a tight economy with rising prices for everything we need to live on, giving sacrificially to the church is a BIG thing.

And yet, when we step back and take account of all we have in our lives, for most of us, responding with gifts of our wealth is small compared to what God has done for us. And God has done much for us!

Jesus starts his ministry by telling the disciples who and what they already are: they are blessed. Blessed, fortunate, privileged, favored. Why? Because they are near and dear to God's heart. Whatever else Jesus' first followers go on to learn or accomplish in the future is merely the outgrowth of what is already their ground-of-being, their identity, their solid-as-a-rock foundation. God gifts their identities to them, without condition or measure. They are freely blessed, and so they're freed to bless others.

We, too, are freely blessed, and we're freed to bless others through the small things we have and do. And within the community of faith, they add up to something big.

Thank you for the small things you do that make a joyful noise to the Lord. They're big.