

"The Little Things"

Text: Mark 10:2-16

God grant to each of us faithfulness in the little things, that we lose not that "one thing needful." Amen.

You've probably observed that there are those who focus on the day-to-day little things and those who neglect the little things in favor of the grand gesture. Obviously this can take many different forms. Someone can wear threadbare clothes long past their expiration date and then gladly spend thousands on a new boat or car. Spouses can blow off birthdays and anniversaries and then unexpectedly buy their mate a gift costing as much as (or even more than) the value of all the ordinary missed gifts combined. Couples can eat Ramen noodles and oatmeal for a year and then spend lavish sums on a luxury vacation where they eat at five-star restaurants.

The same sort of phenomenon happens in the area of affections and relationships. Children can come to imagine that disrespecting and disobeying mom and dad on a daily basis can be made right with a single "magnanimous" gesture – like clearing their dishes without being told or putting their dirty clothes in the hamper without the threat of bodily harm. Husbands can come to imagine that they can treat their wives like slaves 364 days per year but make everything right with flowers on Mother's Day. Employees can sluff off at work, day after day, but then "make up for it" with one particularly hard day's work.

It's not at all surprising then that we can come to imagine that our God is not all that interested in the little things, and that he can be mollified or appeased by the occasional grand gesture. The reality is that God is interested in both, as he himself will instruct us more fully in our text for this morning, found in the Tenth Chapter of Mark's Gospel:

ESV Mark 10:2-16 *And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³ He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴ They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." ⁵ And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." ¹⁰ ¶ And in the house the disciples asked him again*

about this matter. ¹¹ And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." ¹³ ¶ And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." ¹⁶ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

This is God's Word. Respect it accordingly. Since these are God's words, they alone can never fail you, never lead you wrong, never cause you to stumble. Which is why each week we pray to the Author of these words, "**Sanctify us by Your Truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!**" Amen.

Given how we tend to go through life, it's not surprising that Christians tend to overlook the little things *that Jesus did* and to focus only on the grand gesture. The grand gesture, of course, was his submission to the torture and death of the cross, where he paid in full for the debt of sins that we owed. What we tend to overlook are all the "little things" that he did to make that sacrifice what it truly was – and what it needed to be. Jesus had to offer a perfect, sinless life on Calvary's cross. Anything less would have been rejected as wholly inadequate, as failure. That means that he contributed to our salvation every moment of every day that he walked this earth. For Jesus it was not therefore either/or, it was both/and. Not the little things *or* the grand gesture, but both.

Our deficiency in failing to appreciate the full magnitude of what Jesus has done for us robs him of the praise and thanksgiving of which his is unquestionably worthy. It causes us to see his service and sacrifice as less than they truly were. It can also cause us to adopt a profoundly misguided understanding of what our lives as children of God are supposed to look like.

Honesty can be brutal. An honest look inside our own hearts will force us to see many things we wish were not there. There is a certain appeal, for example, in carrying out grand and lavish works for our Lord – high profile, low time consumption stuff that will get lots of attention. The day-to-day, moment-by-moment and mostly unnoticed grind that is life is not nearly as appealing.

Jesus has always been interested in the small stuff. He strongly condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for their high profile "showing off," while also making it clear that even simple, loving obedience in the most common, menial jobs pleased him very much. There is, of course, no social praise for serving God in private, nor does the day-to-day represent the quick and permanent fix that we naturally crave. We tend to shy away whenever the commitment is for all day, every day. It's hard to get excited and remain faithful in the little things.

Our text offers divine guidance and support. You may have noticed that our God here provides two examples, which at first might seem disconnected but are not: 1) the relationship of husband and wife, and 2) the vital importance of raising a child in the fear of the Lord – consistently leading a child to Jesus even when that child is very young. Both hold little glamour in the eyes of the world, but both are vitally important to our Lord.

Our text speaks first about God's view of marriage. Though it is becoming less and less clear to the world around us, God hates divorce. If we bear in mind that marriage is God's institution and that the bond of marriage is broken only by death or sin, then we will have at least made a good start. But there is more here. Jesus is not *only* concerned with the major event - the divorce. To live a life of love and thanksgiving means that we live the day by day and the moment by moment *in harmony with his will*. That means husbands and wives are to show love and respect to each other day by day, moment by moment. How is it to anyone's credit that they "never got divorced" when they for all those years refused to love and respect each other in the Lord? We are not to imagine that we are pleasing God by sinning against our spouse in thought, word, and deed moment by moment, but that all is somehow overlooked if we can just manage to avoid divorce. The "little things" matter.

Which brings us to the second part of our text, children, and the connection to marriage is not arbitrary. God not only determined that children would rightly be provided in the context of marriage, they also represent "little things" that are vitally important to our Savior.

Certain phrases in the Word of God slip past us, mostly because they are used so often in our society and have therefore come to mean little or nothing. We have one such in the second half of our text where we read, **"But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant."** Another translation says that he was **"greatly displeased."** The words are ordinary enough. In fact we seem to talk long and often in our day about being "indignant" or "greatly displeased" about just about everything – from the price of stamps

to how other people drive. Of particular note here, however, is the fact that this is the *only place* in the Bible where the Holy Spirit applied this term to Jesus. Nowhere else do we read that Jesus was **"indignant"** or that he was **"greatly displeased."** Once you understand that, doesn't it make you want to stop and take another look at this whole event? Many things in life *troubled* Jesus, but if this is the only place where we read that he was **"indignant,"** it absolutely deserves a closer look. What was it that so troubled Jesus, and why?

It probably comes as no great surprise that the Bible was talking about the abuse of children when it identified Jesus as greatly displeased. Even the unbelieving world tends to recoil at child abuse, though apparently less and less so. Yet Jesus' great displeasure is not like the world's. In fact what caused Jesus such indignation in our text is the sort of action (parental and otherwise) that actually draws *praise* in our society.

We know from other passages how jealous Jesus was and is about the little ones of his kingdom. You will certainly recall his dire warnings against anyone who offends one of his little ones. But we need to understand Jesus' attitude here. Why is this so important to our Lord? The answer is more than just *"Jesus had a soft spot for children."* This reaches to the very heart of Christianity.

What troubled Jesus so profoundly was the fact that his own disciples were trying to prevent little children from "troubling" Jesus. Parents were trying to bring their children to Jesus for his blessing. The disciples believed that Jesus had bigger and better things to do. Jesus recognized that there *is* nothing "bigger" or "better" for anyone to do. He himself said, **"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God."** A childlike faith is absolutely essential and central to all of Christ's teaching. The disciples acted as if the children didn't count. Jesus' reaction informs us just how wrong that attitude truly was. The little ones weren't little things to Jesus. He said, **"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."** Man still today – even those who include themselves as followers of Jesus Christ - ignore this striking truth in our text. They continue to treat children as though they are innocent until a certain "age of accountability." They, along with the child's own parents, continue to prevent little ones from coming to Jesus in baptism, and by offering them silly fluff rather than the Word of God – that Word which they treat as "inappropriate" for young children.

What the disciples did greatly displeased our Lord because he recognized that it is a *childlike* faith that each one of us must possess in order to be called children of God. Adult intellect is far too cynical, far too skeptical. Only a childlike faith accepts without question, based only on the words of our Savior and even in the absence of all visible evidence. Children could give a lesson on the right kind of faith, but it was *children* that the disciples were trying to drive away. No wonder Jesus was so indignant!

Yet we are not to be spectators here, imagining that this applies only to others. No matter what your station in life, this ought to make you sit up and take notice. When our Savior is greatly displeased, we need to pay attention. As parents, we hinder our children from coming to Jesus every time we skip church unnecessarily, every time we allow a child to decide whether or not they will go to church, every time we fail to make the Word of God a part of our daily family life. As older members, we hinder the children from coming to Jesus every time we give them the impression that our religion is really only a Sunday morning affair. As young adults, we harm children every time we sleep through a sermon, ignore Bible Study, and fail to participate as adults in the Christian congregation. Our children see all that goes on around them - all those "little things." Everything they see either builds them up in their faith or tears them down.

You can answer for yourself which God loves, and with which he is greatly displeased.

Here again, once we take a long, hard, honest look, we see in ourselves only failure and unworthiness. Yet how sweetly then the gospel falls on the ears of sinners like us. I am indeed a wretched, self-centered sinner. I have failed in both the big and little things. And yet the very fact that I am a sinner assured me that Jesus died for *me*. Jesus suffered the real terror and torment of the Father's wrath toward sin *in my place*. Thanks, praise, glory, and honor to our dear Lord Jesus. These sins too are forgiven. Forgiven – for all my failures as a parent. Forgiven – for all my failures as a spouse. Forgiven – for the sinful examples I have set. Forgiven – for often and grievously displeasing my dear Savior with my many sins.

Let this forgiveness fill your heart with joy and thanksgiving, even as you carry on the struggle to thank your Savior with simple obedience – in the big things and in the little things. Amen.

^{ESV} **Genesis 2:18-24** Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 2:9-11, 14-18** But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ ¶ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers...¹⁴ ¶ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

^{ESV} **Mark 10:2-16** And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³ He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴ They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." ⁵ And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." ¹⁰ ¶ And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹ And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." ¹³ ¶ And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." ¹⁶ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.



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The 20th Sunday after Pentecost – October 6, 2024

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 536 (Red Hymnal)

"Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Genesis 2:18-24) Our Old Testament Lesson forms the timeless basis of God's will for marriage. Marriage is God's institution, set down in the perfection of the Garden of Eden at Creation. It is sin to tamper with God's institution in any way, no matter what the world might come to believe. God himself defined marriage and declared that he alone, through death, could end his institution. God help us to preserve this divine institution in every way.

Psalm 84 (Supplement page 38) (Brown Hymnal)

The Gospel Lesson: (Hebrews 2:9-11,14-18) What a comfort to know that Jesus was fully human. Jesus therefore knows exactly what we are going through because He Himself suffered through the trials and temptations of this sin-broken world. Now this same Jesus, who understands our trials, speaks to the Father in our behalf. Again, what a blessing that Jesus "**was made like His brethren**" in all things.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 421 (Red Hymnal)

"Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spake"

The Sermon – Text: Mark 10:2-16 (Printed on the back page)

"The Little Things"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 625 (Red Hymnal)

"Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 261 (Red Hymnal)

"Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (18) Average (32)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Monday	-6:00 p.m.	– Church Council and WF Meetings
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – St. Stephen of San Francisco has called Pastor Matthew Hanel. Faith of Manchester, MO, has called Pastor Frank Gantt. Electronic copies of the Proceedings of this summer's CLC Convention are now available. See Pastor Roehl for information on how to download a copy for yourself.

Church Building Project Video – All are invited to remain after the service this morning to view the video of the 2003 building project here at St Paul. All will find it edifying and uplifting. The timing is especially appropriate in that the fine man who supervised both of our building projects here at St Paul, Jack Mayhew, was recently called home to his Savior's side. The presentation is about 17 minutes long.

Church Council and Women's Fellowship Meetings – Both the Church Council and the Women's Fellowship are scheduled to meet this morning during the fellowship hour.

Allison Loeb Baby Shower – A baby shower is planned for Allison Loeb on Sunday, November 3rd at 1:00 pm. Please see the announcement on the bulletin board for more information.

Christmas Flower Order – Believe it or not, it's time to order Christmas flowers. There is a sign-up sheet on the mailbox table. Address any questions to Sandy Roehl.