

"Little Things"

Text: Mark 10:2-16

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

How important are the little things in life? I'm not talking about the truisms like "It's the little things in life that count." I'm talking about the seemingly insignificant things that tend to fly under our radars – the second glance that prevents the accident, the note of support that reaches someone at a critical point in their lives, the spur-of-the-moment decision to go to the party where you meet your future spouse. Most of us tend to focus on the big, flamboyant things. We notice the things that everyone notices, and the rest tends to pass quietly by.

When we think of Jesus, for example, and what he has done for us, we find ourselves drawn to the big things – Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter – and we ignore the little things. We thank him profusely for the physical pain he endured for us, while we ignore or take for granted the single most important reason we have to thank him. Jesus was made sin for us - for all sin. He then received on the cross the full punishment for sin that was justly deserved by every man, woman and child who ever had or ever would be born. In other words, Jesus got what we deserved, and we got what Jesus deserved.

Yet here too, too much is made of the *physical pain* of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus is not our Savior just because he endured the pain of the cross on our behalf. He is our Savior because he *bore our sins on the cross of Calvary*. The worst part of that payment was that he was, during that time on the cross, abandoned by his Father in heaven. The reason has been made clear to us: **"For He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."** (2 Corinthians 5:21) We cannot imagine what that must have been like - to know God the Father so intimately and then to be abandoned and punished by Him. We cannot even comprehend with our poor, limited understanding of the Trinity how it is even possible that God was abandoned by God.

But it goes even beyond that. The cross would have been pointless had not Jesus succeeded in every single little thing. The *perfect* Lamb had to be sacrificed for the sins of mankind. Every single battle had to be won. Every single commandment kept. Every single temptation met and conquered.

The point here is that big things are most often made up of countless little things. With this concept in mind, we turn now to our text for this morning. From this Word of God we *will*, as always, gain clarity, insight, direction, and strength. Our text is found in Mark's Gospel, the Tenth Chapter:

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.*

These are the words of God. Read and study them as such. Since they are God's words, they alone can never fail you, never lead you wrong, never cause you to fall. 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.

The pain inflicted upon Jesus was certainly bad enough in itself, but satisfaction for our sins was the single greatest gift we needed from our Savior. This is the one thing that we could never do for ourselves. We could have suffered physical punishment on earth; many human beings have. We could have endured persecution and abandonment by our friends; many men have. We could have endured the shameful treatment at the hands of the soldiers and even death on the cross; others have done just that. We could never, however, have paid for even one of our countless sins by enduring such things. *No ordinary man ever has.* Jesus therefore did for us what we could never even *hope* to do for ourselves. What is more, in paying for our sins, Jesus endured the full wrath of God the Father toward sin – *in our place*.

Is there a Christian who can remain cold and indifferent when reminded of these sacred truths? Is there a Christian who is not filled with gratitude for the Savior who snatched him from certain death in hell - from eternal torment far in excess of any pain we could even imagine here on this earth? What Christian, when he contemplates these sublime facts in the

still hours of private meditation, does not shudder at the thought of what each of us faced, even while we are flooded with a sense of rescue and escape at what is now ours? A new man has been created in us, and that new man is fully content *and excited* to live a life of humble submission and service to such a Savior. Having put on that new man, Christians then gladly struggle to be like that Savior in all ways, big and little.

Unfortunately, since we are made up of both old and new man, such sentiment is never consistent in our hearts and lives.

Honesty can be brutal. An honest look inside our own hearts will force us to see many things we wish were not there. Many of us might be willing, for example, to carry out grand and lavish works for our Lord – high profile, low time consumption stuff that will get lots of attention. But when it comes to the day-to-day grind that is life, we really would rather not have to work that hard at being Christ-like.

The fact remains, Jesus has always been interested in the small stuff. He strongly condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for their high profile "showing off," and he made it clear that simple, loving obedience in the most common, menial jobs pleases him very much. Our problem is that there is usually no social praise for serving God in private. Nor does ongoing service represent the quick and permanent fix we crave. We tend to shy away whenever the commitment is for all day, every day. Again, honesty can be pretty ugly.

Now, this whole business of service and pain and quiet, private, consistent obedience can seem rather disjointed and meaningless *unless we come to understand exactly how and why it all applies to each one of us*. This is where our text comes in. Our text lists two examples: 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, and the general rule is that if the world despises something, we probably need to take a closer look.

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 not broken without sin, then we will have at least made a good start. But there is more here. Jesus is not just 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 showing 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? Do not imagine that you are pleasing God by sinning against your spouse in thought, word, and deed moment by moment, but that none of that really matters if you can just

avoid divorce. That's the first topic Jesus brought up in our text. What about the second?

Certain phrases in the Word of God slip past us, mostly because they are used so often in our society and have come to mean so little. We have one such in 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 this or that (or words to that effect). It is interesting to note, however, 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 hear 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,"** doesn't it deserve a closer look. What was it that so troubled Jesus, and why?

It should come as no surprise that the Bible was talking about the abuse of children when it identified Jesus as greatly displeased. Child abuse, in our text? Even the world has a problem with child abuse. Only this isn't the sort of abuse that conjures up the wrath of the godless. In fact this is the sort of action (parental and otherwise) that often draws praise in our society.

We know from other passages how jealous Jesus was and is about the little ones – by far the most important "little things." He himself said that it would be better to have a millstone hung about your neck and to be cast into the depths of the sea, rather than to offend one of his little ones. But why is this so important to Jesus? 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 a 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."** The fact is 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 made it clear that this sort of thing is more important than any of us could imagine. 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 fact 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 the little children from coming to Jesus by offering them silly fluff rather than the Word of God – that Word of God that they label as inappropriate for young children...

The fact is what the disciples did incensed 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 – 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.

As we said earlier, physical pain was not the worst aspect of Jesus' suffering. The spiritual harm that adults inflict on children hurt him much more.

No matter what your station in life, this ought to attract your attention as perhaps nothing else should or could. When our Savior is greatly displeased, we need to sit up and take notice. As parents, we prevent our children from coming to Jesus every time we decide to skip church unnecessarily, every time we allow them to decide whether or not they want to go to church, every time we forego family devotions and fail to give our children an example of what putting God first in our lives really looks like. As older members, we help to prevent 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 our children every time we sleep through the 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," and it either builds them up in their faith, or it tears them down.

Answer for yourself which God loves, and which he hates.

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 reprobate. I have failed in both the big and little things. And yet 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 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, opening your eyes to see and guiding your steps along the path that pleases your Savior – in the big things and in the little things – all for that Savior who died to give us life. Amen.

Scripture Readings

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.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The 20th Sunday after Pentecost – October 7, 2018

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 5 (Red Hymnal)

"Lord Open Thou My Heart to Hear"

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 sinful to tamper with God's institution, no matter what the world might come to believe. God help us to preserve this divine institution in all that we say and do, even as we acknowledge that sin taints every earthly relationship, and that our sins in this area are not unforgiveable.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 84 (Supplement Page 38)

The New Testament Lesson: (Hebrews 2:9-11, 14-18) What a comfort to know that Jesus was fully human. He therefore knows exactly what we are going through because He too was tempted while he walked this earth. Now this same Jesus, who understands our trials, speaks to the Father in our behalf and in our defense. 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 – 398 (Red Hymnal)

"Renew Me O Eternal Light"

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

"Little Things"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn - 386 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"My Savior Sinners Doth Receive"

The Prayers of the Day followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn - 386 (Stanza 5) (Red Hymnal)

"My Savior Sinners Doth Receive"

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, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. 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 (30) Average (41)

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 and coffee time
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.	– Sunday Worship Service w/Communion
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time

CLC News – Pastor David Schaller is considering the call to Trinity of Spokane. That congregation has called Pastor Emeritus Robert List to serve them during their vacancy. He has accepted that call. Bethel of Morris, MN has called Pastor George Dumann. Pastor Doug Priestap has accepted the part-time call to Resurrection of Calgary, Alberta to split his time serving both that congregation and his current call to Grace of Live Oak, FL. Pastor James Albrecht has returned the call to Our Redeemer's of Red Wing, MN.

Outreach Committee Notes – Subject to Church Council approval, the Outreach Committee is proposing that we begin holding monthly (or twice-monthly) events where volunteers provide daycare at the church, which would provide adults the opportunity to fellowship at the location they choose. Married and single members would be encouraged to participate. The Committee is also in the process of producing a pamphlet entitled "Why Go to Church?" which would be made available in our tract rack and used as a handout in personal evangelism.

Christmas Flower Order – Please consult the sign-up sheet on the mailbox table if you would like to order Christmas flowers this year. Question can be directed to Cindy Ollenburger.