

The Little Big Things #2  
Little Big Man  
June 9, 2024

Tell the Irish story: Shawn an industrious lad, works for a factory that makes elaborate jeweled boxes. One fine day, Shawn goes up to the guard's gate with a small box in a wheelbarrow.

Patrick the guard asks Shawn what's in the box. Nothing but sawdust. Not believing the lad Patrick opens up the box and sure enough there's only saw dust. "I guess you can go Shawn", but I've got my eye on you.

The next day Shawn rambles up to the guard's gate pushing a wheelbarrow with a small box in it. A box he declares, is full of sawdust.

This went on for a month. Finally, Patrick stops Shawn and tells him this: "Look, Shawn me boy, I know you're stealing something. I just can't figure out what it is and it's driving me to drink...I'll tell you what Shawn...you tell me what you're stealing, and I'll let you go...no arrests and you can keep what you stole...so my boy what are you stealing?

Shawn looks at Paddy with an impish smile..." Wheelbarrows" and as he walks out the gate he shouts to Paddy; Paddy, it's the little big things that you need to pay attention to.

I want you to know that our God is in the "Little big things". If we will allow the Holy Spirit to teach us to see the "little big things", we will walk with our God.

Today; I have a question framed around "the little big things".

Question: **Was it worth it? When It's all been said and done...was it worth it?**

For us to be able to answer that ambiguous question you have to know that there is a part of us that will try to corrupt our ability to assess what the worth of anything is.

Corrupt: to alter from the original or correct form or version: to degrade with unsound principles or moral values: to change from good to bad in morals, manners, or actions

We are immersed in a world that is at war with God. You, your life, your marriage, your family, and our church are at the very center of a battle. There is no place for passivity, and there is no one that is neutral.

The bottom line of this is that Satan is a God hater. He is the author of terror and destruction and he will stop at nothing to destroy the glory of God. And that is why he works so hard at corrupting our hearts.

Jesus lives in us. Where we go, He goes. We represent Him, His life and His freedom. We represent the Father.

What begins to corrupt our hearts is that when we become discouraged, disheartened and defeated we will find ourselves living in what I call the shallow self.

The reason we live defeated tho victorious is this:

The shallow self is chained to the past.

The past pain shame and fear is all that it sees and knows.

The shallow self has no faith, no hope and does not know love.

The shallow self is blind. It cannot see a view to the future.

The shallow self is mute. You will lose your voice.

It is also deaf to Love's call. The call to hope, the call to have faith.

The shallow self tries to drown out the call of Jesus, the call to move away from the grave and live...the call to be the beloved. The call to grace.

I want to tell you that the shallow self does not understand grace.

Grace is an enigma to the shallow self and this shallow world.:

### **Definition of *enigma***

1: something hard to understand or explain. Out of place. Doesn't fit. A puzzle.

Simply defined, *grace is God's unmerited favor*. If you did anything to earn it or deserve it, it is not grace. If God owes it to you because you're a pretty good person or you've tried to do the best you can, or followed the Law, it is not grace. If God gives it to you because He foresaw that you would believe in Him of your own free will, it is not grace. Grace means that you get the opposite of what you deserve. We deserve God's wrath because we have sinned against Him. Instead, He saves you and me by His grace.

Grace cuts directly against the grain of human thinking, because it is not fair. We value fairness. If someone does wrong, he should get what he has coming. If someone does right, he should be rewarded. But if someone does wrong and gets rewarded in spite of it, we protest, "That's not fair!" They should be punished. Suffer.

Another effect of grace is this...it makes us too free.

Our worldly mindset is patterned after the world; it is juxtaposed between two realities...Law on one side and chaos at the other extreme. The law I am talking about here is not the Law found in the Old Testament. It is the law that has been handed down to us from this broken world. It is a law where grace does not exist.

You know that law:

- ❖ You'll never be good enough, thin enough, strong enough, smart enough
- ❖ Never fit in...too weird, too tall, too short, too fat, too skinny
- ❖ You'll never amount to anything...all you are and ever will be (you fill in the blank)

Often we spend most of our lives trying to manage the chaos that that law constantly brings into our lives. Living under this law we become beggars and paupers. Slaves.

To get out from underneath the law we must choose a different mindset. We must respond to scandalous grace. Let me describe grace as found in the Scriptures: I want you to know that God doesn't just love us. He lavishes us with love.

**1 Jn. 3:1**

**"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are!"**

He doesn't just give us wisdom; He "gives generously to all without finding fault".

James 1:5

He is rich in "hesed, tolerance and patience" Rom. 2:4

His grace is exceedingly abundant 1 Tim. 1:14

"The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

God overflowed the table of the prodigal with a banquet, Peter's nets overflowed with fish, twice.

Question: Does that image fit within your old worldly mindset?

Hear me...when God dispenses His grace and goodness...your heart is a Dixie cup...and His grace is the Pacific Ocean...you simply cannot fathom His heart...it won't fit in the old mindset...but it is believable with the mindset that is set on things above...a world founded on the gracious heart of God...

**When grace happens...it causes chaos to this world...**

Knowing this, will help you to be able to see "the little big things" and answer the question that I posed earlier: **Was it worth it? When It's all been said and done...was it worth it?**

Let me show you how to respond to God's lavish grace and allow the chaos to happen:

**Turn with me to Luke 19**

**Picture this:**

Jesus has just instructed His disciples that they are going to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. It is here he tells them, that He will be handed over to the authorities and He will be crucified and rise again.

This is a serious agenda. So they set their face towards Jerusalem. They have places to go, and important things to do...and nothing is as important as this one goal! Nothing!

**(Read vs. 1-2)**

There were two types of taxes in Palestine under Roman occupation. There was a direct personal and land taxation, collected by state officials; and then there were indirect taxes of various sorts, such as customs duties.

The right to collect these indirect taxes was auctioned off each year to the person offering the authorities the most for the privilege: Zacchaeus was one such man, who would pay the government in advance, and then with a group of assistants they would

recoup the money (and then some), as they collected the taxes for Caesar. It was estimated that as much as thirty five to forty percent of a Jew's income might go to pay their civil and religious taxes.

Tax collectors were considered traitors and extortionists to the Jewish nation. They were especially hated for their corruption.

Zacchaeus was a "**chief tax-collector**" and Luke adds the obvious; "**he was rich**".

I want you to notice a few things about this little man. The finest clothes lined his closets. He wore rings on his fingers, and the best sandals on his feet.

He was a prosperous businessman. He could buy anything his heart desired, anything but self-respect and the friendship of others.

Let's be blunt about this short guy.

He is not a victim of circumstance. He's not misunderstood by his community. He is a genuinely bad man. He has chosen to work for the Romans and bilk his own people. And to be truthful the people don't despise him because they are close minded and judgmental; they despise him because he is a slimy, good-for-nothing thief...and he knows it.

He had everything that the world has to offer; yet his heart was empty. And hard.

Can I take a side road here? Have you become a tax collector as well?

What taxes do you exact on others as they go through the gate of your heart? If unforgiveness, anger, resentment, and guilt sit at the gates you will tax others heavily.

Anyway, maybe, that is what drew Zacchaeus to Jesus. Here was a man who owned nothing of this world, yet possessed the love and admiration of thousands.

And as the crowds pass by, his physical limitations cause him to do something extraordinary.

**(Read vs. 3-4)**

Can't you just see this little rich man shimmying up that sycamore tree, just to see Jesus? What's even more amazing than that is what Jesus did. In the moment it took Him to catch sight of Zacchaeus among the branches, He read the secret lines of heartache that etched in his soul.

And once again Jesus' vision focuses on a lost sinner on the side of the road toward Calvary. This is what He came to do. To seek and save that which was lost. To find His treasure. It is here that Zacchaeus will be exposed to God's flagrant and scandalous grace.

Please note what the Grace that the Savior brings to this rich man.

**First**, He called Zacchaeus by name. A sign of respect. Then He bestowed on him the highest of honors—He expressed a desire to stay at his house for dinner!

Through table fellowship Jesus acted out His passion for the Father.

The inclusion of sinners in meal sharing is a dramatic expression of the merciful gracious love of the new kingdom! Jesus reinforced His words with deeds.

**(Read vs. 7)**

Luke here gives us a condensed version of the encounter. They go home, they sit and talk and eat lunch. I wonder what type of dialogue went on between verses 7 and 8 that created such a drastic change in the little guy's heart?

In Jesus, Zack found that which he could not buy... respect, and worth. He finally found a Rabbi worth following. The next verse describes what happened after dinner.

**(Read vs. 8)**

I want you to notice the amazing transformation of this little man. His life was once stunted by greed, but now flows with generosity. In God's kingdom love can make giants of us all.

What took a lifetime to accumulate; one sentence of devotion to Christ liquidates.

The shallow self gets swallowed up by grace.

**And not by a token ten percent. A simple tithe cannot express a new heart!!!**

Half to the poor. Four times as much in return to those that he had defrauded.

The "four times" figure is the required restoration a thief was commanded to make. (Ex. 22:1)

Grace causes the thief to repent...generously...

Notice that Zacchaeus has begun to follow his Rabbi.

He is now a man of word and deed.

The response to grace offered gives us new words, new deeds, a new heart and a Rabbi worth following.

Seeing the evidence of his faith, Jesus assures Zacchaeus that he is welcome in the new kingdom!

**(Read vs. 9)**

Zacchaeus, the short, gleeful, reformed, tree-climbing x-con man...has a change of mindset...a mindset based on amazing grace...

Here's the little big thing that I want you to see...just in case you missed it:

Grace invited him to lunch, and walked through his front door and the shallow-self ran out the back door.

Once we realize how much grace we have been given, we begin to give grace to others...you can't help it...it is all you will see...

If you asked Zach that question: Was it worth it...what do you think his reply would be?

But here's the little big thing: If you asked Jesus...who is about to pay Zach's bill, if Zach was worth it...what will be His answer?

If you ask Jesus, who paid for all of your taxes, all that you owed, "Was it worth it?" what's His answer?

Now here's my question to you. What's that worth to you? Is that worth finally letting go of the shallow-self and embracing His scandalous grace...

Grace is the little big thing...that we missed, but Jesus didn't. no one would have noticed that little man up that tree...had such a big heart...

Selah.