

^{17:5} The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

⁶ He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

⁷ "Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ⁸ Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? ⁹ Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" [New International Version].

The couple was deeply in love; they had been growing in that relationship for years now. The time to make the pledge to live with one another in covenantal relationship "until death do them part" had arrived.

The past twelve months had been a whirlwind of activity:

- making the arrangements at the church,
- the sessions of premarital counseling,
- booking the reservation hall,
- finding the right attire for each of the participants in the wedding,
- finding the right photographer with whom they felt comfortable,
- as well as a videographer,
- and the DJ to work the reception,
- the caterer,
- the limousine service,

- the florist,
- the decorations at the church and the reception venue.
- More and more and more.

The bride's parents quietly took out a second mortgage to pay for all the expense; "no expense was too great, no detail unimportant." They really wanted this day to be perfect, and to create the perfect memory.

No one was prepared for the disaster that was to befall. Everyone in the bridal party and families were gathered at the church on Saturday late afternoon, scurrying about: getting dressed, applying makeup, touching up hair salon fixings, getting pictures made prior to the ceremony.

Then the preacher went first to the groomsmen's dressing area, and then to the bride and bridesmaids' area. He apologized, to them, but many of the people would later hold him to blame. But he simply had no choice, he said, and he refused to conduct the wedding. It was too late to get anyone else.

The reality of "no wedding!" was hard to sink in for everyone. Oh, of course, it could be rescheduled, but that wouldn't deal with all that had been booked and paid for, for today. The bride and groom, as it turned out, simply could not deal with the stress of that

disastrous day; the wedding not only did not happen that day, but not at all. They separated, over the resulting disappointment, spoken and unspoken accusations and recriminations.

Who was to blame? Like I said, many blamed the preacher. But the laws do not allow the preacher to apply for the marriage license. Only the bride and groom can do that. And they simply forgot.

One little piece of paper, signed by a deputy clerk, who got paid less than anyone else involved in this whole wedding extravaganza.

For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for want of a horse, the rider was lost; for want of a rider, the battle was lost; for want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.

The little things really do matter.

It was fourth and goal, with fourteen inches left between the goal line and the line of scrimmage. A field goal would not do any good. They were down 24-20. This was the Super Bowl. All the work of all the year. All of the training, all of the preparation, all of the sacrifice. The future for all the players involved, and the coaches, and their families. So much was riding on this one play.

The ball was snapped. The quarterback kept the ball. The offensive line jelled better than they had all year long. The mass of

humanity pushing against one another was incredible – enough energy unleashed that, if harnessed, it could probably power the stadium lights for four hours. The zebras came running in from the side and separated the bodies. The referee threw up his hands in the signal for a touchdown. It was clear: the ball had been moved a good six inches over the goal line. What a great come-from-behind victory.

But, on the mandatory review of all touchdowns, slow motion showed that the quarterback's left knee touched the ground about $\frac{1}{2}$ second before the ball crossed over the goal line. The call was reversed. No touchdown. No more chances. The great come-from-behind effort fell $\frac{1}{2}$ second, three inches short.

For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for want of a horse, the rider was lost; for want of a rider, the battle was lost; for want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.

The little things really do matter.

Some of you might remember a sermon illustration I used in my first year here at Saint Marks. I passed out oatmeal raising cookies to everyone here that day. I had made them myself. I got ten of the eleven ingredients just right. But for the eleventh ingredient: sugar, I substituted a like amount of salt, another small

white grainy substance. Whether you were here that day or not, you can imagine the significance of difference.

The little things really do matter.

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⁶ [Jesus] replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed,

As Janet showed the children in the Children’s sermon, a mustard seed is very small. But Jesus said that little things really do matter.

A few years ago, Richard Carlson published a best seller, entitled, “Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff.”

However, two weeks ago, we heard Jesus tell a parable that ended with the admonition:

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”

(Luke 16:10)

The little things really do matter.

And a little bit of faith is what it takes.

We don't have to "sweat" the small stuff, but we DO need to PAY ATTENTION to the small stuff, in order to have a strong faith ... one mustard seed at a time.

The Epistle of James (chapter 3) says that the tongue is the smallest part of the body, like the rudder is the smallest part of the ship, like a spark can start a forest fire. But each can be powerful. And Jesus knew that that little tongue is very important when He warned (as it says at the foot of every email I send)

I tell you, on the day of judgment, you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; ... (Matthew 12:36)

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⁶ He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed,

Our faith is built upon our PAYING ATTENTION to the little things. Jesus also told His disciples and us (in His sermon on the mount)

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? **²⁷ Can** any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? **See how** the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. (Matthew 6)

It's not just “CONSIDER” the birds of the air or the flowers of the field. **ACTUALLY SPEND TIME LOOKING AT THESE THINGS.**

We really don't need to SWEAT the small stuff, but we absolutely **MUST PAY ATTENTION** to the small stuff, every day, to see how God is at work, to see what is the basis of our faith.

Last week many of you were asked to give a small amount of money (in comparison to our normal daily consumption) \$10 – in order to save a life. And I said that I would ask you today how that expenditure of money compared to all the other \$10's you spent this week, in significance, in satisfaction. Well?

It's the little things that matter. You don't have to sweat the small stuff, but you do need to pay attention to it, and act accordingly. And it will be enough. And it will be enough.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.