

Small, Silent & Surprising

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

July 26, 2020

Let me begin with a story.

Thomas Wheeler, one time CEO of the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (a.k.a. MassMutual), and his wife were driving along an interstate highway when he noticed that their car was low on gas.

Wheeler got off the highway at the next exit and soon found a rundown gas station with just one gas pump. He asked the lone attendant to fill the tank and check the oil, then went for a little walk around the station to stretch his legs.

As he was returning to the car, he noticed that the attendant and his wife were engaged in an animated conversation. The conversation stopped as he paid the attendant.

But as he was getting back into the car, he saw the attendant wave and heard him say, "It was great talking to you."

As they drove out of the station, Wheeler asked his wife if she knew the man. She readily admitted she did. They had gone to high school together and had dated steadily for about a year.

"Boy, were you lucky that I came along," bragged Wheeler.

"If you had married him, you'd be the wife of a gas station attendant instead of the wife of a chief executive officer."

"My dear," replied his wife, "if I had married him, he'd be the chief executive officer and you'd be the gas station attendant."

Yes, we often think we have the proper perspective on things or events or even spiritual matters when in fact we are way off.

This morning Jesus tells several parables in Matthew 13, which begins, "the Kingdom of heaven is like ..." Using them, Jesus helps us have proper perspectives on how God works in our midst. Jesus helps us have a new eye, the third eye, to understand how God works in the world and keep our faith fresh and growing.

1

Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.

The kingdom of heaven is SMALL, like a mustard seed.

Have you ever seed a mustard seed? So small, smaller than a sand in the beach.

One of the tiniest seeds becomes a shrub which grows eight to ten feet tall. The shrub is so large and full that the "birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Wow. Can you imagine such a tiny seed produce such a large shrub?

Kyong Hee, my wife and her parents have a vegetable garden in Wilton. They do have green thumbs. I don't.

What I do is enjoy seeing all those vegetables growing beautifully and enjoy having fresh organic vegetables every day.

We all know that small seeds produce all those vegetables. From small comes much.

Jesus teaches that that is the way God works in our midst. God is at work at a small talk, a small gesture, a small gathering, a small beginning, a small mission and ministry.

Look at how God started for the salvation of all creation. God did so by planting a small seed in the womb of a peasant girl, Mary. And a small baby, Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

And Jesus grew up in a small village, Nazareth. Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a small donkey. But we all know these small moves changed the whole world upside down.

We live in a society that praises bigness. Big buildings, big malls, big stadiums, big theaters, big churches. Big numbers get our attentions all the time. "Bigger is always better" is our mantra, isn't it?

My father was a man of prayer. He prayed every day at the dinner table for me and my brothers. You know what he asked of God? He asked God to use his sons as global evangelists and preachers for the glory of God.

I thought therefore from my childhood I would become and must become one of those big preachers when I grew up.

But it did not happen that way. So for a long time after being ordained as a UM clergy person, I suffered from inferiority complex. Look at me. How small I am. I kept asking myself, "How come am I not like a big pastor and preacher like, Billy Graham, Robert Schuller or Tim Keller?" As a result, I fell into depression and was disappointed to myself. There was no pure joy in my ministry.

About several years ago, I attended a lecture series with my clergy colleagues. There I encountered an interesting speaker. When his time came, he introduced himself with joy and boldness, "Hello, I am Peter. I am a small church pastor."

His lecture awakened me and all the clergy participants to see how God is doing God's work through so many small churches in cities, towns

and villages in America and in the world. It was an eye-opening Kairos moment to me.

Since then, I am thankfully and proudly saying, “Hello everyone, my name is Kun Sam Dayfly. I am a small church pastor! Yes, I am a small global church, Fairfield Grace church pastor” My father’s prayer has been answered.

The kingdom of God is small. Small is beautiful and divine.

Would you join me seeing how wonderfully God works in our smallness?

2

The kingdom of heaven is like what happens when a woman mixes a little yeast into three big batches of flour. Finally, all the dough rises.

The kingdom of heaven is SILENT, LIKE LEAVEN IN BREAD.

A small amount of leaven or yeast placed in dough makes the whole loaf rise. Leaven or yeast does its work silently. Likewise, God works silently in this world.

Since the middle of March this year, I have been able to visit my garden more often and see various plants growing, including hyacinth, tulips, azalea and now hydrangeas.

Early in April, I fell in love with bamboos sprouting up along the driveway. I was so thrilled with their new appearance that I went out to see them every morning and afternoon. They grew little by little day and night without making any noises.

Not only bamboos, but also all the flowers in the garden and all the wildflowers along the street and all the vegetables grow silently. Don’t they?

How about trees? All those trees, oak trees and pine trees and Ginkgo trees and maple trees are there silently, changing their clothing season after season. They do not just stand there but produce silently oxygens we need every day throughout the year. How silently God does at work in the natural world.

Jesus said, "The hypocrites love their pretty prayers prayed standing in the synagogue or even on a street corner. They have their reward. But when you pray, go to the room and close the door, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will listen to you."

How silently, how silently God comes and heals and restores and renews us. How silently God works in our life and in this world.

Isn't our world too noisy? Aren't your life so distracted by noises that you become blind to see God working silently in your life?

Don't we need to sit silently more every day to hear God speaking silently and see God's silent spirit working in our midst?

3

The kingdom of heaven is like what happens when someone finds treasure hidden in a field and buries it again. A person like that is happy and goes and sells everything in order to buy that field.

The kingdom of heaven is SURPRISING, LIKE A BURIED TREASURE THAT A FARMER FOUND IN THE FIELD.

In Jesus' day, the safest place to keep your money and your valuables was in the ground. You didn't put your treasures in a bank; you buried them in the earth. The only problem was that you had to remember exactly where you left them. One person's forgetfulness in this story becomes another person's fortune.

Whoever happens to discover a box of treasure in the field must be filled with joy. Such joy is a continuing possibility in the kingdom of heaven where God is at work.

We have been worshipping online for more than 4 months now. Surely it is not same as worshipping in person here in this beautiful sanctuary together.

But thankfully, we encountered some unexpected surprises lately. Do you recall our first online service on March 15? Denise and Greg Tannor, who moved to FL several years ago, joined our first online service. What a pleasant surprise. What a joy it was.

Now I know several other members who moved away from Fairfield some years ago have been joining the worship with us online. Barbara Barcarella in Georgia, John and Randy Russo in North Carolina, Paul and Peggy Raymond in Florida, Eliz Kakas in Florida and Eugene O'Connell in Arizona.

What a joy! What a wonderful surprise! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord for these joyful surprises!

There is another surprise we experience. That is life we live in this world. Who planned to be here to live? Isn't it a big surprise God made for us?

Another great and joyful surprises is a community life we share together here at Fairfield Grace. As you know, I was born in a small island in South Korea and moved to California when I was 19. My wife and I moved to east coast about 33 years ago. Fast forwarding, we are here with you in CT and I do journey with you as Jesus' followers.

All of you were born somewhere and sometime ago and moved here and there. Some may not move at all. But we all are here together

now, worshipping and fellowshiping and following Jesus Christ, our Lord together.

Isn't it a big surprise? Isn't it a great joy? This is how God has been at work in my life and in your life and in our midst.

I am on tiptoe, looking forward to seeing what many other surprises the Lord would bring all of us as we journey together in the uncertain and turbulent times.

May we all see and celebrate God's wonderful works that takes place in smallness and silently and enjoy a great joy God of surprises offers us.

In the name of God the Creator, Jesus Christ the Savior and Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Amen.