

## God Works in Large and Small Venues

Text: Zachariah 4:9-10

**Introduction:** Friday evening after Easter Joyce and I attended one of the five weekend services of a church in Post Falls, Idaho. This church on Easter weekend had over 12,000 in attendance. On the next Sunday morning we worshipped in a Lutheran church with about 30 in attendance. Perhaps my expectations for the mega church were too high and my expectation for the small church was too low, but regardless my heart was strangely warmed. To use a phrase from John Wesley in that smaller gathering. Larry King interviewed Pastor Joel Osteen and his wife this past week. It was disclosed that each Sunday over 40,000 people came to the renovated Rocket's Arena to praise the Lord. Added to that are seven million people watching the service over television.

In 1983 Joyce and I attended the Billy Graham Conference for Itinerant Evangelists in Amsterdam. Dr. Cho, pastor of a church in Seoul Korea said his church was pregnant with a membership of 850,000 believers. I have friends who have visited there in the last couple years and report that the church has greatly surpassed that goal.

**What are we to make of those staggering statistics?** Let me admonish you to think before you speak. The Acts of the Holy Spirit reports that on the birthday of the church 3000 were saved and baptized. Then we read the number of 5000. Later it says that "the whole city of Jerusalem was filled with its doctrine." Eusebius, a church historian states that the first church in Jerusalem may have had as many as 100,000 members. Make room in your heart for a dynamic moving of God's spirit. **BY THE SAME TOKEN DON'T BE INFECTED WITH THE VIRUS OF NUMBERS. Let's look at our text. Zechariah 4:9-10 (You can see more of the emotions of this event in Ezra)** let me review some of the significance of small beginnings, of seemingly insignificant events, or small beginnings that show that God is not limited by big or little instruments.

The voice of God to Elijah was not in the mighty wind or the earthquake, but in **the still small voice.** II Kings 19.

We are asked to "consider the ant" because it is a display of God's creative wisdom. Prov. 6:6-8. I want to consider the bee. 60,000 can live and work in one bee hive. It takes bees 7,000 hours to make one pound of clover honey. 33% of the American diet is tied to bee's activity. There is a deep concern in our country because of the Colony collapse of the bees because they represent \$14 billion dollars to the American crops. Their value is disproportionate to their size.

**But let us look again at a few of the Biblical value placed on smallness.** Jesus spoke of the smallest of seeds, the mustard seed, and said that the kingdom of heaven would expand from such a beginning. Mt.

- Jesus was deeply touched by the offering of a half of penny by the widow. He was struck with her giving all she had.
- Jesus said that God was concerned for one lost sheep and left the 99 to find it. Luke 15
- Jesus spoke of the preciousness of little children in Luke 18:10
- He encouraged “the little flock” of believers in Luke 12:32.
- Jesus that in matters of discipline as few as two or three believers can make binding decisions. Matthew 18.
- Jesus chose James the less (perhaps) describing the shortness or the youth of one of his apostles. And Jesus called down that very short man Zaccheus and said, “let’s have lunch and you’re buying.” Luke 19:3

What about this verse from Jesus in Luke 19:17. Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, have authority over 10 towns.

EVEN THE SAVIOR WAS DESCRIBED AS A TENDER SHOUT A ROOT OUT OF DRIED GROUND. Is. 53:2

So what about this church? You are part of the 60% of churches in America who would be called “small.” God is not limited to work in either small or large venues. I had the privilege of pasturing California’s first Baptist church. It began in 1849. Through the decades it has known smallness. In the 1930s she had one of the lowest points in her history. At times only 30 gathered. Pastor Dawson met with them and taught them truths about the filling of the spirit and prayer. He wasn’t there very long. The congregation called a dynamic unique preacher from San Diego name Louis Julinel. He was a character. He preached in tails. He played his ukulele in the Sunday night services. At one time he boasted of a membership of 4900. During WWII the church ministered to 50,000 military personnel, feeding them, housing them, giving them tours of SF.

The communist party had built a gymnasium behind the church on Page Street and a four story apartment building on Octavia St. The communist party was condemned as illegal and lost both properties to the city. When they were placed up for auction the church purchased them turning them into great places for their food and housing ministries.

The story of the Bible is not about small or large, but it’s about a Great God. Read Jonathan’s conviction: I Sam. 14:1-6. On a personal level I am so grateful that God shows mercy to the small and insignificant. I was a tiny baby barely 4lbs. I was a skinny lad of 11. I was just an average student in school. But God in his mercy called me to receive Jesus and then called me to preach forgiveness of sin to all kinds of people. Not many rich, not many mighty, but a lot who were poor, just surviving, hearts that had been broken have been rescued by Jesus. God’s love knows no limit.

Hey, don't be a hindrance to growth. Don't worship smallness. But don't give up! A small church can hope and have validity. When a congregation has people who are committed to Jesus and to the mission of God it will count for the Kingdom. As I studied for this message I did some research on the FBC of Antioch. In my research I found out who is the most important person in this congregation. If you want to know who that is you can come and look in my book. When you recognize that person I want you to agree with me. I don't want you to share that person's name with another person. Just shake your head admitting that I am right. Then take a moment to ask God to help that person be all that God wants him or her to be.