

This morning I am going to invite you to watch a TED Talk. Some of us are very familiar with TED Talks while others of us may be watching our first one ever today. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, and Design. TED Talks are short lectures given by famous people and everyday people that are meant to be “ideas worth spreading.”

Today there are over 2,000 TED Talks that anyone can watch online. There are literally hundreds of videos that I could have chosen for us to watch today but alas I could only choose one. I almost went with one which was a teenager describing a simple device she invented to bring clean water to India but I decided at the last minute to go with this one today. I’m going to invite us to watch the video first and then read the Scripture which we will be reading from the gospel of Matthew.

https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_gilbert_success_failure_and_the_drive_to_keep_creating

Elizabeth Gilbert invites you to go back to the place that you love more than anything. With that in mind, I am going to invite you to consider the words from the gospel of Matthew as a place for you to consider to retreat to. Specifically words from Jesus from the 13th chapter.

We have spent a couple of weeks in the 13th chapter of Matthew reading different parables that Jesus told. Parables are stories that Jesus told using everyday images to convey deeper meanings. Today we are reading parables about small things producing big results.

As we read these various parables I invite you to place yourself as the object that Jesus is describing in each of these parables. In other words, I invite you to see yourself as the mustard seed. I invite you to see yourself as the fine pearl.

Read Matthew 13:31-33, 44-53

Many of us have come into worship today feeling as though we have been beaten up this week. I was talking to two guys recently who were sharing about what it is like to work for large manufacturing companies. They told me that it is very hard to work where they are employed because people are in it just for the money.

As a result these two guys are feeling very beaten up by people who are their bosses. One was telling me that he had a good year in his company but that all that his boss wanted to focus on was one mistake that he recently made and that his entire performance review was focused on this one mistake.

Another guy complained to me about trying to change the culture on the team where he works. He said that as he tries to get his team to work together that there is a lot of resistance against him. As a result he is also feeling very beaten up.

Others of us may be feeling beaten up by other events that are happening in our families and in our personal lives. Family conflict leaves many of us feeling knocked down.

Today I invite you to hear these words from Matthew as being words from Jesus describing you. You are like a tiny mustard seed that has been planted by God but that has the potential inside of you to produce something very large. You are like the yeast that God has been working on over and over and over and one day it will rise and produce something that others will enjoy.

You are like that treasure that has been hidden in a field which has been lost but now has been found. You are like that fine pearl of great value that is worth everything to God. You are unique. You are special. You are valuable.

In the video that we watched we heard Elizabeth Gilbert describe what it was like to achieve great success and also great failure. But she learned to return to the place which she loved more than anything else. For her that was her writing.

When you encounter those times of great failure or you are in an environment where you are being told by someone else that you are a great failure, I invite you to return to these words from Jesus. I invite you to block out those words of negativity and hear these words as God's words being spoken to you.

Like the mustard seed, you may be small but you are a gift of God which has inside of you the energy to produce something large. "Don't get used to what you hear on the morning news for the morning news is yours to alter."

You may be feeling a lot of pounding on you right now but like yeast in the hands of God you are being made into something that will bring great joy to others.

You may have heard from others that you are of no value but in the eyes of God you are that treasure or great pearl that is special and unique and loved by God.

In all of these parables the focus is on objects which don't seem like much but God sees each of these items in a different way. Hear the words of God being spoken to you. You are precious. You are a treasure.

Don't get down and focus on your failures. Don't pay too much attention to those trying to tear you down.

Trust that in God's eyes you are a gift. Live each day recognizing that you are a gift from God. AMEN.

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-Power, Samantha, Sojo, Verse and Voice, 7/28/17

-Given: July 30, 2017 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)