

**05 September 2010      Small Things**

**by Rev Rusty Butler**

**Scripture - Mark 4:26-34**

Well obviously we need to talk a little bit about Labor Day. On September 5, 1882 the first Labor Day parade was held in New York City. Twenty thousand workers marched in a parade up Broadway. They carried banners that read "LABOR CREATES ALL WEALTH," and "EIGHT HOURS FOR WORK, EIGHT HOURS FOR REST, EIGHT HOURS FOR RECREATION!" After the parade there were picnics all around the city. Workers and celebrants ate Irish stew, homemade bread and apple pie. At night, fireworks were set off. Within the next few years, the idea spread from coast to coast, and all states celebrated Labor Day. In 1894, Congress voted it a federal holiday.

We celebrate Labor Day with a little less fanfare now...but it's been an idea in the Bible for a long time.

In Genesis we find God resting on the seventh day, and the priests were even more emphatic about the seventh day being a day of rest, listen to these words from *Exodus 31:15*...by the way if you know of any biblical literalist's in your family just quote them that one. That'll stop 'em.

Regardless of whether or not you work outside in the workplace, or in the home, whether you are of working age or retired, we still have work and labor to do. We can't get around it.

There is a prayer by the poet, Christina Rossetti, and here's part of it:

Give us grace, O Lord, to work while it is day, fulfilling diligently and patiently whatever duty thou appointest us, doing small things in the day of small things and great labors if thou summon us to any. Amen.

It seems to me that days of small things are most of the days of our lives, and really days of small things are most of the days of the universe. You know, the scientists say that the universe started as a very small thing, like a pinpoint oh maybe 13 or 14 billion years ago. And then in a little bit of a moment...that small seed expanded and grew to our universe. I don't understand how it works...maybe you do, but it blows my mind because I can't help asking what was outside the little pinpoint and how did the pinpoint get there and how does that pinpoint hold all the beginnings of all those millions and millions of galaxies and well how many pinpoints were there and even though I believe that is about as close to what happened as anything else, it's no wonder that some people have such a hard time with it and just give up and say, God created the heavens and the earth in seven days a little over 6,000 years ago and there you have it.

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There is power in small things, little moments though. We know that.

I wanted to share three small things...and maybe they will remind you of small things that you see and by reminding ourselves of our similarities we might be able to understand each other better and maybe even what we call the divine.

First, there were a couple of months there at the beginning of summer where we didn't have any funerals, no deaths and those were good months..but these things kind of ebb and flow and so now over the past few weeks we've been in the flow part and there have been a number of services for members and friends of the church.

So this week, I went down to Ft. Logan on Thursday afternoon. Went out to the staging area and met the representative from the Monarch society. Gary walked up to me and I thought he looked to be about 21 or 22 years old. And we started talking and I asked him how long he'd been working at the monarch society and he said 12 years. I thought, "what in the world?!"

We went out to the area where the services are done and we had the military part of the service, I was amazed again at how they are able to fold the flag into that triangle with one of the stars right in the middle of the blue triangle and they do it wearing those white gloves and how after so many, I've never seen them ever drop a corner of the flag.

Anyway as the service was concluding, a bagpiper started playing and we watched him play and then walk away and as he did, there were three Canadian geese that lifted off and flew across the absolutely still water. Small moment...beautiful.

I drove back home, thinking about that and I got just to the west of our place and over there are some small pastures. I was driving by one of them and I noticed a number of horses by the fence line. There were people feeding them by pulling grass and weeds in the ditch and holding them up to the horses. I noticed a man and then as I got closer I noticed three little girls and their mother feeding the horses. And the unusual thing was that they were all dressed in traditional muslim robes. And I could see the little girls faces as they pulled the grass and held it up for the horses to eat and their eyes were just dancing and there was delight on their faces and I thought, I wish everyone could see that and understand that we are not that different. We delight in delight.

Later that same day, Connie Koenecke the Church Administrator, had her grandson Brady here. He is a redhead and about 2 maybe. She told me you may need to entertain Brady for a little while I need to get this email out. I allowed as how I could do that. I mean I've got two boys and I figured I could do it.

So Brady and I started walking and he wanted to go to the front door. Because he wanted to push that Blue Button for the automatic door to be opened. I thought that is good. He must have spent about 15 minutes going in and out that door. Thought it was the funnest thing to push that blue button and oh go through that door and then push the button when

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he got to the other side. If it was up to him, he'd probably still be doing it. Just delight in something so simple, so small.

Some people believe that god things need to be big, the bigger the better, powerful, invite hundreds maybe thousands, rent the Lincoln monument and host a big party. But I'm not so sure God works that way. In Christ we don't have a God that wrote a huge poster of rules or yelled out the rules so loudly that every person on earth had to hear them. Instead, in Christ we have the God who showed us a small thing, a small mustard-seed life and death and new life of a small, single human being. And from that very small thing came a whole universe of meaning and life and love.

I was reminded of dulac, and Heart butte, and Salt Lake City and Alamosa where groups of our church went to work. I believe we were a gift to the people we went to serve. And I think we met Christ there and I believe we were Christ to others. And all of that happened in days of small things, small tasks, a tear out of moldy sheetrock here, a roof repair there, a yard cleared of garbage, little conversations, just small things, tiny seeds planted. Small things done with diligence and patience. Small things, tiny seeds, are the work of Christ. He did not live or heal or teach on some grand scale. He was a small man in a small country with a small reach.

When we think of our work on this Labor day, perhaps we should think of small things.

We follow Jesus who showed up two thousand years ago in a small out of the way place, doing seemingly small things to change small days. A healing touch here. A compassionate word there. We too can do Small things like not giving up on flawed friends. Small things like enjoying life. Small things like speaking a word of truth to the powers that be

What small things do you need to say and do and refrain from saying and doing?

Let us pray.

Give us grace, O Christ, to work while it is day, fulfilling diligently and patiently whatever duty we have, doing small things in the day of small things and great labors if that is what we are summoned to. *Amen.*

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