

## That's Pretty Amazing!

[Text - Matthew 25:31-40]

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June 1, 2014

This morning, everyone here has the opportunity to be part of a truly *Divine* Experience! We're not just going to talk about God. We won't simply look at examples of how the Holy One has worked throughout history. Today, you and I will be inspired and infused with the Divine Presence that is already here in our midst.

It's here within the smallest child among us.

It's here for us to touch and taste, in the simple forms of bread and juice.

We will feel that Sacred Presence, as we hold our neighbors' hands in our concluding Circle of Blessing.

And when we leave this place - empowered by the Holy Spirit - you and I will embody that Divine Presence, as we extend Christ-like compassion to others.

Now I realize, this is a lot to expect from one little worship service. However, today we celebrate the *abundance* of our Still-Speaking, Life-Affirming, Creative Source. Today we remember the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, who recognized that Divine Presence in the tiniest mustard seed, and in the most unlikely people. And today, we recognize and celebrate the marvelous ministry of our Sunday School teachers and students. Therefore, today is a great day to think about how greatly we are blessed, through even the smallest acts of kindness; and about how you and I can make a positive difference in the lives of others, through our own small acts of kindness and compassion, just like our Sunday School classes have done.

Every year, our students and teachers take on special projects that help put their faith into action. One year, they raised money for the United Church of Christ's Haitian Earthquake Relief fund. Another, they helped provide goats, hens, and bees for milk, eggs and honey for impoverished communities, through the International Heifer Project. They collected money and clothing, which some of them took

to the East Coast to help victims of Super Storm Sandy. They have generously helped our BUCC members and friends with Spring cleaning and yard work, asking only that those who wanted to pay them, simply make a donation to our local food pantry.

This year, in addition to their own Lenten offerings, they made and sold beaded name-tag lanyards, raising \$325 that was sent to Brookside Hunger Center - the place where Drew Wilson and other students and teachers spent a day of their Spring Break volunteering. And on Sunday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, our students and teachers will run their after-church carwash/hotdog-stand, to complete this fund-raising project. Little hands and big hearts, doing seemingly small things that lead to tremendous results! I think that's truly terrific! And according to Jesus, that's what the Realm of God is truly all about.

When Jesus sees a huge crowd of hungry people, he joyfully takes five small loaves and two little fish offered to him by a young boy. He then gives thanks to God, and shows us that when we share even the simplest gifts, the Divine Abundance can be experienced and enjoyed by all. Jesus reminds us that in the Divine Realm, little things really do become big; the lowly *are* raised-up; and the meek, not the mighty, inherit the earth. Jesus has this amazing ability to look beyond the humble appearance of things or people, and to see the tremendous potential and possibilities. He transforms a little group of lowly fishermen, tax collectors, humble men and women, into a compassionate yet powerful community of faith. A community not unlike our own: relatively small in number, but amazingly strong in its mission of compassion and service.

I've said this before: it doesn't take a Mega-Church to do magnificent things for God and others. What it *takes*, is a Church Family that has faith in the gracious and abundant power of God. That's because in the Realm of God, even the smallest act of kindness, the slightest step of faith, can bring about remarkable results. Maybe that's why Jesus speaks so often about the importance of the little things in Life: the widow's small coin offered in faith; the cup of cold water given with compassion; the small acts of kindness done "to the *least* of these"

our brothers and sisters. In the Divine Realm, our faith and our lives have a tremendous capacity to develop and grow - like that tiny mustard seed. With time, patience, and persistence, every small step forward that you or I take, brings us closer to fully reflecting the Divine Image of the Living, Loving Christ. So even in those times when it seems like our faith is dormant - or *dead* - it doesn't mean that it isn't deepening and growing and preparing to spring-forth in awesome and amazing ways.

This past year, our faithful and dedicated Sunday School teachers not only told and showed our children about the Love of God, they once again involved them in sharing that love with one another and with people in need. They planted within these little ones the precious seeds of kindness and compassion, generosity and love. You and I now have the remarkable privilege of watching - and helping - those seeds sprout and grow and blossom among us for many years to come. And that, my friends, is a truly Divine Experience!