

PRACTICAL LIVING SERIES TWO
YOUR TWO CENTS
Pastor Jack Schull
II Kings 4:1-7; Eph. 2:10

Intro welcome:
 (pennies around campus)

- Q how many of you have change in your pocket?
 Q Any coin collectors here? (anyone collect pennies?) no one does...
 Q how many of you have seen pennies on the ground?

There are 3 types of people in the world:

- 1) penny picker
- 2) penny passer
- 3) penny partner

Most of us probably ignore the penny – pass it by thinking it’s only a penny – what difference does that really make to me. We usually just leave our extra pennies at the cash register for the next poor person who gets the bill to be \$9 dollars and 1 cent.

Pennies seem insignificant – in fact, we’re entertaining the idea of doing away with the penny (article: says it costs .05 cents to make 4 pennies now)...

Illustration: *Think about this:*

An article in the Atlanta Journal Constitution,:

A one cent increase in the hourly wage for all the employees of Home Depot amounts to \$6.5 million a year.

If Krispy Kreme increased the cost of each donut by one penny, the company would increase profits by \$27 million.

A one cent per case increase of Coca-Cola would bring the company \$45 million a year.

"A Penny Saved," Atlanta Journal Constitution (8-22-04); preachingtoday.com

Sometimes the little things in life can help us and make a difference. Example: **batteries** – a lot of things in our world run off little sources of power called batteries!

hold up battery.

Ask congregation to take a minute and list as many things they can think of that run off batteries.

→ **suggestions: flashlight, toys, cell phones - pacemakers**

It’s easy to lose sight – but sometimes – **it’s the little things that are of big importance.**

Transition:

I want to look at why it’s the little things that matter to God! We live in a culture that is hyped by the BIG things, grandiose events get the press...

- SUPER BOWL – is there a more over-hyped event on our planet?
 - Player was interviewed and asked “you’re getting ready to play in the ultimate game – how do you feel? “if it’s the ultimate – why is there another one next year?”
- Think about sales of cars/clothes → every add is the BIGGEST SALE EVER or the BIGGER THAN THE LAST YEAR’S BIGGIEST SALE EVER!

- We order drinks in the drive through and what is all over the drive up menu – YOU CAN UPSIZE YOUR ORDER FOR ONLY 40 cents...
 - Anyone notice how big drinks are getting – just keep getting bigger - used to be that only chicken came in a bucket – now you can get a soda in a bucket – need your own back brace to carry it around
 - Burgers: cheeseburger, double quarter pounder – then came the triple whopper –
 - Which I've always wondered when I hear guys order a triple whopper, king kong size fries and a diet coke? Hugh?

We're seemingly fascinated by the mantra that BIGGER IS ALWAYS BETTER...

but I wonder if God is much more concerned and interested in the little things – more than we think?

- The little choices you & I make to serve/honor Him & share His Love with others...
- Do they matter more than big plans and grandiose ideas?

Maybe BIGGER, BRIGHTER, LOUDER doesn't necessary catch God's attention

Why? B/c God has a tendency of taking our little and stretching it to do BIG things – as you survey thru scripture – you begin to see this **KINGDOM PRINCIPLE @ play: "pattern" =**

OUR little + God's POWER = BIG impact!

(repeat Kingdom pattern) = say it with me...

Let's read together II Kings 4:1-7

- tucked in the 12th book of the bible
- hidden in 7 little verses
- lies a snapshot of God, a gigantic picture of how He likes to operate

II Kings 4:1-7

2 Kings shows the blessings that came to those who aligned themselves with the true prophets of God.

The place where this incident unfolds is not stated but probably the widow lived in one of the cities where the schools of the prophets were situated, perhaps Bethel, Gilgal, or Jericho. Since the prophet had a wife it is clear that the company of the prophets was not a monastic settlement (or settlements) of celibates. This widow turned to Elisha for help in her hour of need. She appealed to him on the basis that her husband had been faithful to the Lord (he revered the LORD)

It was an accepted custom in Israel that if a family could not pay off its debts by any other means, some or all members of that family would work as servants for the creditor (Lv. 25:39–41). This was the position a widow of one of the prophets found herself in, and she was about to lose her two boys. The situation was serious, for the widow would have no-one to work the family land. She faced a further downward spiral of debt if Elisha could not help.

Widows in that culture had no voice – no defenders

- she lays out her plea and you can sense the feelings of inadequacy, stress
- all she has going for her is a tiny bit of oil – it's all she can bring to the table

Today I want us to lean into a new reality about God – how he likes to operate...in this psg and all through scripture... then GIVE THEM THE THREE POINTS OF THE DAY ON SLIDES... #1, #2, #3...so let's unpack 'em

#1 point: God can use the little you have!

This widow didn't think she had anything to help. The oil seems as an after thought and so miniscule that she sees no hope in that. Often we may feel like we don't have anything to offer – anything to contribute. But the truth is God has given us some gifts, talents, resources, passions, desires and abilities that God can – and wants to use! We may feel like they can't do anything, but God knows that he doesn't need anything more. He loves to birth big change, big impact – out of virtually nothing.

For in the words of the Angel to Mary: “nothing is impossible with God”. **(Luke 1:37)** We see this pattern reinforced all throughout scripture...think back too:

Illustration:

you see His KINGDOM principle play out in:

- picking abraham (a childless man @ 100 yrs old and giving him a baby that grows into nation of Isreal)
- 1 man hiding out - named Moses to free a nation
- picks Gideon's army of 300 to take down an army of thousands
- little shepherd boy over a giant to win a battle
- Elijah over the 400 prophets of Baal
- small baby born in obscurity of a manger - that grows to be the Savior of mankind & the changer of history
- 1 boy and his lunchable – feeds over 5,000+ pp
- a small group of 12 disciples who go on and birth the Christian church that reached millions & is reaching millions of more with hope still today...

AND:

- little 'ol you & me – who God is longing to use to impact this world and those around you

Application:

What are those skills, talents – God's wired within you?

Some of you have this ability for carpentry and you wonder how He wants you to use it...

Some of you have this passion to pray – or to work with children

Some of you are wondering why you have this extra income – how to invest it

You may have energies, connections, resources that you maybe even skim over in your life...that God might want to use?

→ God is more excited than you – to use those things to make a difference.

Transition to video:

This morning – I'd like for us to hear from a few people who have been using their passions and energies to invest right here around Casas – their joy in partnering with Him...

→ insert video of Volunteer Testimonies

→ if you want to get started using your little – you might consider looking at opportunities around here!

God can use your little to make an impact...

#2 point: God will use what you bring to the table

There came a point when this widow had to act on the word given her by Elisha. She had to go gather the jars from her friends and neighborhood. She had to resolve in her heart that God was going to do something for her. She had to trust.

And so it is with us – we have to get to a place where we lean into trusting God to use us in spite of our weaknesses and limitations – **to use our little + His power = Big impact!**
 God will use what we bring to the table → b/c he is active and engaged in doing things – creating this masterpiece around us that we might not even notice in the moment!

Illustration:

Mike Yaconelli in his book, *Messy Spirituality*, wrote of how individual believers, who may think they are insignificant, are brought together in the body of Christ to create a magnificent work of art.

Morehead, Minnesota, the home of Concordia College, a very bleak part of the country (especially during the winter). All year, the community anticipates Concordia's annual Christmas concert. Each December, a huge choir and a full orchestra give a musical performance in the concert hall at the college.

Every year, the people in the community create a unique background for the concert—a one-hundred-by-thirty-foot mosaic. About six months before the concert, the community designs a new mosaic, and the painting begins. Thousands of people, from junior high schoolers to senior citizens, paint the mosaic. They paint by number on a large-scale design that has thousands of tiny pieces. Day after day, month after month, one little painted piece at a time, the picture on the mosaic gradually takes shape.

When the mosaic is completed, they place it behind the choir. It has the appearance of an enormous, beautiful stained-glass window. The weekend of the concert, those people who helped paint arrive early, along with their friends and neighbors. Throughout the building, you can hear people whispering, "See that little green spot below the camel's foot? I painted it."

Every year in the middle of the summer in Morehead, Minnesota, thousands of unknown, ordinary people paint a tiny insignificant tile. Six months later, the result is a spectacularly beautiful masterpiece.

Mike Yaconelli, Messy Spirituality (Zondervan, 2002), pp. 118-119; preachingtoday.com

FRIENDS: that is the story in which we find ourselves → God is actively creating this masterpiece of His Heart – His narrative → we get to help play a part in that work of art

Ephesians 2:10

You may feel like you don't have a lot to bring – that your contribution is small, but God wants to use **your little + His power = Big impact** for His agenda/His kingdom!

So look for opportunities throughout the day/week where you can step in and do something. **GET IT ON YOUR RADAR SCREEN OF LIFE!** Where you can bring a resource that will help, use your gifting to support or you can give your attention to someone who might need it. **WHERE YOU CAN EXPRESS HIS LOVE IN PRACTICAL WAYS...**

Illustration: LET ME SHOW YOU 2 SIMPLE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO ME RECENTLY – PROBABLY HAPPEN TO YOU – ALL AROUND US ALL THE TIME...

#1

I went to take my trash out the other night – forgot the recycle – got it out 10 minutes later – my neighbor is there watering her plants – don't see her often they're selling the house. We start talking a bit – just felt like I needed to ask her how she was doing – how I could pray for her...she shares some struggles and I'm able to share my story of hope in Christ – my spiritual journey a bit – pray with her right there for God to minister his love to her...

→ I might have missed the opt if I had simply ignored his nudge to talk with her...

#2

Recently I was going to a bagel shop to study – like hiding out and had planned to accomplish a bunch. That's when I noticed him as he was talking with other people sitting outside... I had an opportunity that I was going to pass up; one that made me feel a bit uncomfortable; but I listened to the nudge of God to have breakfast with John. (describe my breakfast with John the homeless guy – the thing that stuck out to me was his question... “would you like to sit with me, b/c I don't get that very often”).

Transition:

John was blessed by that meal together → But I was too!

When you use your 2 Cents → your little – people get blessed → and you do too!

I sat there and prayed for my attitude to change – then realization hit me - that God takes delight as I worshipped Him and that's the point of doing those little things – it's for an audience of ONE.

That when I do the little things with the right attitude and not for any gain for myself – but to honor God – to let the spotlight shine on his fame and story a bit more → than that is worship! Loving John on behalf of Jesus and encouraging him, laughing with him and talking with him was ministering to Jesus.

Transition:

God can use your little efforts –he will

#3 point: Jesus delights when we bring our little to him.

(we see this all over scripture – but catch this in: **Mark 12: 41-42**)

In the couple verses right before that (Mk 12:38-40) Jesus has just been ranting about showy spirituality...he finishes his rather heated criticism of those who want everyone to “notice” their holiness...**and he sees a woman whom no one notices.**

→ calls his disciples over to drive home a point...He notices – He is blessed – He delights...

There exists this truth that most people miss – this reality that Jesus can be ministered too!
We serve a God who can receive...

Think back to the Garden – as he's praying and expressing how his soul is broken – put yourself There → wouldn't you wanted to have put your arm around Jesus? To try and comfort – maybe His disciples did too – but they didn't at the time...

Matthew 25:

→ Jesus says this profound truth: that as we minister to others – we're actually ministering to Him!!!! He's blessed by it – and we get blessed too!

The spiritual life is about living the little things for God...

YOUR 2 CENTS MATTERS! IT COUNTS! GOD IS BLESSED BY IT...

Conclusion:

Transition:

I don't think we can overlook the importance of this kingdom principle – or ignore the reality that God desires to use our little bit + his power to make a difference:

- In your family
- At your office
- On your team
- In your classroom
- In your neighborhood

→ **The little things count more than we know...**

Story: during the last few months of WWII – the british conducted daily bombing raids over berlin

- The bombers – take off from air strip in britian, and fly surrounded by smaller fighter planes...whose job was to keep the german fighters from attacking the bombers that were easy targets
- One night – after successful raid – the bombers were returning and came under attack...
- Somehow, one bomber got separated and found itself flying alone with no protection
- The crew watched as a german plane moved closer and closer – until it was finally in range
- They prepared for the worst and watched helplessly as tracer bullets began spitting from the fighter
- Bullets whizzed by – over and under – until thud,thud,thud,thud,thud
- Five bullets slammed into the fuselage, near the gas tank
- The crew braced for the explosion, but nothing happened
- They could see fuel pouring out from the bullet holes...but there was no explosion
- Miracously they were able to make it back to their base
- A few hrs after they had landed – a mechanic showed up in the crew's barracks with 5 crumpled bullets
- He handed them to the pilot – who carefully opened the shells and to the their amazement – they found a tiny wad of paper inside
- When he unfolded the paper – he found a note that read...
- **“we are polish POW's – forced to make bullets in factory. When guards aren't looking, we do not fill with powder. Is not much, but is best we can do. Please tell family we are alive.”**
- The note was signed by four polish prisoner's of war

→ **5 tiny bullets out of millions of bullets made during the war, made all the difference for the crew of that bomber...**

YOUR two cents matters to God!

You never know what **HE** can do with a life that's living out the little things for Him

I'd like us to reflect for a moment – listen as God might be whispering what a little thing he needs you to do... as we

Conclusion:

Transition to worship song/video clip (at Casas) : (you matter)

your little + His power = Big impact

Your 2 Cents really does make a difference

Will you stand for a blessing and prayer:

May you have the eyes to see opportunities God opens all around you

May you embrace the life of living those little things out – as worship for your Creator

May you be blessed by investing your 2 cents for the kingdom....

Closing prayer:

Father, thank you, for your desire to want to utilize us in your plans. Help us to never lose the wonder of that partnership with your Holy Spirit – give us an attunement to your voice. Help us to recognize those little ways – the little things we can do; that you can multiply. Thank you that you can and will use us. May your story and your fame grow in abundance as a result!