“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin” (Zechariah 4:10).

The crying was so loud that people who were miles away could hear it. The crying was strange, though; it was mixed with happiness. About 2,500 years ago, the exiles had returned to the land of Israel. They laid the foundation for a new temple. The younger folks who grown up in exile were excited and filled with joy as they looked ahead to the new temple, but the older folks wailed with lament because they had seen the previous temple in all its glory. This new one just didn’t match up.

Through the prophet Zechariah, God encouraged the Israelites not to despise “the day of small things.”

What’s smaller than a group of exiled rejects returning to a seeming God-forsaken land and embarking on a building project?

How about a king born in a manger? That seems like a pretty small thing, too.

How about that same baby growing into a man and then proclaiming a kingdom while himself poor, homeless, and rejected? The culmination of that preaching - just another crucified rebel. A small thing.

But these small things add up. Small things are ordained by a very big God. The message of Zechariah is still true today. Instead of despising and becoming discouraged with the small and the ordinary, rejoice! God wants to work in and through you for God’s glory and your joy.

I get it. It often seems that we don’t have much to offer: “I don’t have much money.” “I’m too old.” “I don’t have any amazing talents.” “I’m only from Garrett County.” “There are just a few of us.”

But it can start small. God is urging us to not despise the small things.

Don’t despise the small things - for example:
Don’t despise the few extra minutes you start spending in prayer.
Don’t despise the extra hour you decide to devote to serving in the church.
Don’t despise reading the Bible for a few minutes every day.
Don’t despise the time devoted to a weekly Bible study group.
Don’t despise the small steps of daily obedience and sacrifice.
Don’t despise the card you sent to encourage a shut-in.
Don’t despise the phone call you made to check on someone who has been ill.

Don’t despise devoting time to attend worship, to praying with the saints, to singing the songs of faith, to hearing the Word proclaimed. Don’t despise these things because they make a difference. It encourages your brothers and sisters in the faith. It changes hearts and impacts lives. It helps you to grow in
Christ-like love and compassion. It transforms you by the power of the Holy Spirit. It glorifies God. Whatever God has called you to do, “Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin.” Move out in faith with the assurance that God will help you every step of the way.

Our culture conditions us to think that “bigger is better” and that success means larger. But small beginnings are the seeds that sow potential for exponential disciple making. Big things start small. Jesus modeled this with the twelve disciples, taught this, and calls us to embrace the type of faithfulness that comes through small beginnings. In Mark 4:31-32, Jesus said that the Kingdom “is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade.”

When I visited John Wesley’s hometown in Epworth, England, I was struck that the seeds of the Methodist revival were in this small community. Yet from this town, which was smaller than Oakland, the Methodist movement and Wesley’s message of God’s grace spread to every corner of the globe, so that there are an estimated 70 million Methodists today. When I walk out to the old McCarty farm and see the beginnings a church that started with a few small families and a log cabin along the Youghiogheny River, the message hits me again: big things start small. If that’s the case, then your offering, as small as it might be, can be used for great purpose. Instead of comparing what we can do to what others can do, let’s simply give to Jesus and see what he does!

According to Vincent Van Gogh, “Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.”

Grace and peace,