

**Huge consequences from small actions made in faith**

What are the big issues that you worry about or hope for in your life?

As I get to know people in Grace Church I hear about worries over failing health, deepening illness and the realities of aging.

I hear of worries about adult children and grand children who seem stalled in life, or failing to thrive.

I hear about debt and slender finances and job security.

I hear about a longing for community, for friendships, a place to belong, to care for others and receive care.

How many of you watched the tight-rope walk across Niagara Falls?

Steve Walenda walked a huge distance over a place which would terrify me. It cost him both effort, courage and a great deal of his personal money.

The Canadian Customs officer asked him "What is the purpose of your visit to Canada?" Walenda replied, "To encourage people to believe in their hopes and dreams."

Repeatedly in his crossing you could hear him say "thank you Jesus" and "Praise the Righteous God"

I watched his family gather in quiet prayer, holding hands, lifting up the walk to God and all the possible outcomes to God's good keeping.

In Scripture we hear of the prophet Samuel going to a dusty village to anoint a boy as God's next King for Israel. He faced the wrath of King Saul, a possible bloody attack on the village, or personal punishment.

In the early days of the Church, after Pentecost. That group of between 10 and 50 people (no one knows exactly how many) started to see people step out to talk to friends and strangers about this man Jesus, who had had been, what he had done and taught, and what God had done through him, and how God had raised him back to eternal life from his brutal death. In villages, coffee shops, at bus stops and family meals. Why? Who would be interested? Who would be converted? Anyone?

I watched a man, in what I guess are Middle Eastern clothes, help an older lady, in what I guess were Indian clothes, with a walker, get across the junction at Eglinton and Kennedy. The warmth of her upturned smiling face when she thanked him, and the generosity of his hand gesture touched me. What had he to gain or hope for here?

"What is the purpose of your action here?" They might have been asked. Like Walenda replied, they might have said, "To encourage people to believe in their hopes and dreams."

Jesus tells two stories in today's Gospel.

In the first a man sows seed and then leaves it, going about his business with no knowledge of germination, photosynthesis, pollination or anything else. Then he sees a field of rich wheat. It is God's creative work, unseen but real in results, bringing abundance out of a small act of sowing.

The second is about the mustard seed, a thing so small that if you dropped one it is too small to be worth picking up. But Jesus points out that this grain of salt sized seed contains everything needed to bring to life a tree as big as an apple tree. And amazingly it dies and must be reseeded next year. Again the point of this parable is that it is the small act, the small seed, which sown in trust, results in a huge result.

We sometimes get overcome by the size of the thing we want to achieve. The things we long for seem too far away. Our fears are too great to face!

It starts with little, do-able steps.

Debt can be overwhelming. It is too deep and too wide.

One little step of Hope and faith. Go to God in prayer and slowly, bravely tell God of the fullness of your fear. Tell God about what you owe and how it got to be so big. Second little step. Trust God will help you. Act as if God is already helping.  
Third little step. Go and talk to someone who knows about debt. Julia Greenidge is a person who helps. There are others.

Children and grand children are endless worries. You long for them to have good, productive, creative lives.

Little step one. Pray for them. Tell God all about them, in detail, and without holding anything back. Praying is like talking on the phone to someone you know and trust and is a very good listener.  
Step two. Believe God is answering your prayer right from this moment onwards. So from now on treat these younger people as if they are succeeding. Trust them and stop coddling them or scolding them. Just treat them with the respect a successful child would deserve.

Negotiating the inevitable path of illness and aging is really frightening.

First do-able step. Talk honestly with God in your prayers about your fears and hopes. Treat God as an old friend who knows this path that leads out in front of you.

Secondly, get a pencil and paper and write down the best steps you can imagine happening that would enable you to get through. What support will you need? Which friends can you call on? Who in the family is there to support you? What sort of housing, cooking, cleaning and so forth will you need help with? Make this plan asking God to help you think clearly.

Third step. Talk to someone who knows about this stuff, or can direct you to a guide here.

In Grace Church I have great longings and worries too.

I long for Grace to become something truly wonderful, light and life giving. A place of teaching and healing, of service, worship, and spirit filled faith.

I encourage you to embrace this too. It is a big goal, big like a tree, nourishing like a harvest of wheat. So the small steps that begin it.

Go to God in prayer and tell God what you hope for in Grace now, and when we get to Kennedy Rd. Let your heart and your mind run free and design your perfect church.

Second. Think of this Church not as "The Church" or "Their Church", but as "My Church." And make it your practice to describe it as "My Church" whenever you think or speak of it.

Third. Decide, with God, that you will do something to make this church, our church, truly great. Think about what piece you can help with, what ministry you could take up, what gifts you can offer.

Fourth. Believe that God has heard your prayer and is already granting it. Believe that Grace will become a beacon of God's presence in Jesus. Believe, even when it feels hard to believe and easier to give up. Act as if it is happening.

Small acts of commitment, of gentleness, of care, of justice, of faith that God can do these things. These are the seeds we sow, small and apparently insignificant.

These are the small acts we carry out, based in thankfulness to Jesus, rooted in a praise for the righteous God.

These are acts, the purpose of which is to encourage people, and ourselves, to believe in our dreams and hopes.

These are the small gestures which we speak of when we say,

Glory to God, whose power working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen