

October 2, 2016 Lamentations 3: 19-26, Luke 17: 5-6.

Hope, Faith and Stewardship

We have heard the old saying

“The longest journey begins with a single step.” Or

“The best presents come in small packages.” Or

“It only takes a spark to get a fire going”

British economist **E.F. Schumacher** wrote a book way back in 1973 called **Small Is Beautiful**. It was the beginning of a global rethink of the all-consuming concept, *bigger is better*.

Today we are discovering that *small is beautiful* in church matters, as we seek to *downsize* our church footprint and *right-size* our operations, in the face of an aging and shrinking congregation. And we are in good company for as today’s scripture readings reveal the Psalmist and **Jesus** were each right at home with *small is beautiful* so long ago.

Today we celebrate World Communion Sunday. In *faith* we join hands around the world and share a morsel of Bread and a sip from the Cup. In *hope* we remember the allowing love of **Jesus** and take a portion of it into our own lives.

From our scripture readings we have these themes of **hope** and **faith** and from our church life together we have the annual autumn theme of **stewardship**. *Hope, faith* and *stewardship* spring from the same foundation as Holy Communion; **gratitude or gratefulness**.

They share the same dynamics of *small is beautiful*.

Hope is hope, no more no less, something we *hold on to* or we don’t. We remember the grace and goodness that daily come from **God** and in **gratitude** we stick with it through thick and thin.

Faith is faith, no more no less, we *have* it or we haven't it. There is no faith store to go too, to buy more faith. **Gratefully** it only takes the smallest spark of faith to start anything.

Stewardship is stewardship, no more no less, we *do* it or we don't. It is a way of life, a way of sharing and caring out of a sense of **gratitude** for what we have.

Our Christian tradition calls us to *hold, have* and *do* all three of these *small but beautiful* aspects of our life together, and each begins with a **gratefulness** that trusts daily in **God's** goodness.

So, think about today. Is it just another day in your life? Or is it a precious gift? Today is the one and only day that is given to each of us. We only get today, today. We never get tomorrow, today. So the only appropriate response is **gratitude** or **gratefulness**.

If on this day we find joy in helping others or connecting for service or find satisfaction in just doing the mundane things that support our life together, then somewhere along the way *we will hold on to hope, have faith and act as Stewards*.

If on this day we gladly put up with inconveniences, or find strength to turn the other cheek and not sink into self-pity then somewhere along the way *we will hold on to hope, have faith and act as Stewards*.

An **attitude of gratitude** opens our hearts to these *small but beautiful* blessings and lets them flow through us.

Just by our eyes, by our smile, by our touch:

Just by our presence, our gratefulness, our generosity:

Just by these *small but beautiful* things somewhere along the way *we will hold on to hope, have faith and act as Stewards*.

We *hold on to* the *hope* that new every morning is **God's** love.

We have faith the size of a poppy seed that is enough to transform this day into a day that communes with the whole wide world.

Hope and **faith** together become acts of *stewardship: Stewardship* which makes every day, a really good day, through the generosity of an **attitude of gratitude.**

Application for Today

Stewardship for the 21st Century requires a healthy transition to *small is beautiful, where we give what's needed*, to ensure our *small remains a beautiful response* to **God's** call.