

Which present would you rather have – the big box or the little box?

One of the things I enjoyed as a child were the occasions when there was a large box wrapped under the Christmas tree or on the birthday table.

What was in it? A doll? A chemistry set? A playhouse?

One time, the box was so big, it was wrapped in the colored paper of Sunday comics.

I thought perhaps it was the pedal car I had been wanting from the Sears catalog.

- I tore open the wrapping and discovered – another wrapped box inside.
- I unwrapped that box and found yet another wrapped box, smaller than the first.
- Inside that box was another wrapped package and inside that, yet another.
- **Finally, there was a tiny wrapped box that could not get tinier.**
- It was a jewelry box with a beautiful necklace inside.

In that experience, I treasured not only the necklace, but also the fun of unwrapping many packages and the anticipation of what the gift could possibly be.

Good things come in small packages, I remember my mother saying.

...

God is up to something like this when he sent Samuel to Jesse's family and had him "unwrap" the sons from the largest to the smallest

– the eldest to the youngest – in search of the new king for his people.

The Lord already knew who that person was, just as my parents knew what the gift was inside my big box.

But for the sake of his chosen people

– for the sake of the relationship between them

– I am your God and you are my people

– **the Lord reveals his purpose and will so that it can be seen bit by bit, layer by layer.**

So what do we see?

1. God does not choose his servants based on the same criteria that humans use.

- a. We choose the biggest, best, and brightest
- b. We look for influence, wealth, and prestige
- c. We invest where we can get the most return
- d. We reward beauty and glamour
- e. These are the ways of humanity
- f. **But God chooses differently.**
 - i. God chooses the young, the small,
 - ii. the poor, the disreputable,
 - iii. and those who can offer no return on God's investment.
- iv. **Silly God! People think**
- v. Look where it gets you
 1. – persecuted, killed,
 2. suffering, and penniless
- g. And God answers back : *“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. Is. 55:8*

2. God accepts no volunteers or applications for the work of serving him.

- a. There is no resumé that would get God's attention
- b. No claim to ability that God should give preference.
- c. Imagine what Jesse's sons were thinking and feeling when Samuel said that one of them would be the next king.
 - i. Ambition
 - ii. Fear
 - iii. Envy
 - iv. Thirst for power
 - v. Eagerness for glory
 - vi. Greed
 - vii. Bewilderment
- d. But the Lord passed over all of them who were present.
- e. None of them had the heart God sought for this king.**

3. God calls those who serve him. God chooses his servants.

- a. *"You are my servant.
You have been chosen to know me, believe in me,
and understand that I alone am God. Is. 43:10*
- b. Jesus says to his disciples, *You did not choose me, but I chose you. John 15:16*
- c. When we volunteer for a job, we are in control.
 - i. We can quit when we want,
 - ii. commit as much or as little as we want,
- d. When God calls us, God is in control
 - i. and God claims 100% of who we are
 - ii. and gives us 100% of who he is.
 - iii. God's ways are not our ways;
 - iv. God accepts no volunteers.

- v. God chooses and calls people to join in his saving purpose.

4. God's call comes with confirmation.

- a. God does not leave us wondering about his call
- b. God's call comes with a sign
 - i. – a visible, tangible,
 - ii. public affirmation of what God is doing.
- c. When the Lord chose David to be the new king, he had Samuel anoint David.
 - i. Pouring oil on the head with public witnesses is an ancient way of designating rulers and public servants.**
 - 1. Nowadays, we have coronations and inaugurations
 - 2. But among God's people, we also have baptism and confirmation, ordination and consecration
 - a. All of which are signs confirming God's call to particular persons to serve him
 - b. It is no coincidence that the Sacrament – the sacred sign--of Holy Baptism uses both water and oil**
 - c. as the visible and tangible means of God's gracious confirmation of his call and claim on a person.**
 - d. Baptism is our connection to David, and to Jesus – our anointing into the life of God's kingdom.
 - e. As the apostle Paul says, (Rom 6:3-4) *when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death. ⁴ For we died*

and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

f. And again (2 Cor. 1:21) it is God who establishes us ...in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

d. God confirms us as his called disciples by the anointing of baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

e.

5. Finally, God gives us everything we need.

a. Just as we do not volunteer to serve God and

b. Just as it is God who chooses us by criteria that are beyond human understanding,

c. So God equips us for whatever service he calls us for.

i. With God's anointing, comes the power and life of the Holy Spirit

ii. With God's anointing comes the new heart that does the will of God and holds nothing back

d. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:27ff

e. God has equipped each of us for particular service.

...

Good things come in small packages

– and God's things come in small packages, too

- young boys – and girls,
- tiny mustard seeds,
- one grain of wheat buried in the ground,
- one baby in a manger
- one small-time rabbi from Galilee.

God accomplishes the most spectacular things through the most unlikely means:

- A savior king from a shepherd boy
- A tree of life from one small seed
- A 4-fold return on an investment in one little tax-collector named Zacchaeus
- A banquet for thousands from a boy's lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fishes.
- A baby Savior and a crucified King
- ...

So look around at the children and youth here

– they are not the future of the church,

They are the church now.

You are already anointed through baptism to be God's servants in this world.

You are already slaying the giants of indifference and apathy that are the enemies of faith and hope.

You are already sharing your lunch with the hungry

And you are being the tree of life in which the homeless and poor find shelter, food, and community.

God starts young and God starts small.

And God calls all of us

– **to be witnesses to the tree, the meal,**

the anointing, the cross,

the resurrection and continued presence of

Jesus:

the generous and extravagant display of God's will for life and salvation for all.

And the best thing? The most amazing thing of all?

We are the small package at the heart of the big present.

We are the precious life being unwrapped by God.

As we hear in 1 peter 2:

...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Young and old,

small and large,

rich and poor,

---God calls and anoints us to serve him in this world that needs to know where to find life and salvation.

Our words and actions make Jesus

God's anointed Savior and King

known as the Lord of life.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Just for you:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52iLjug_hqM