

Sample Sermon for Asset Sunday:
God of All, Big and Small

Tell a personal story about being in awe of God in the context of experiencing something large and how the experience made you feel. For example... Standing at the base of a mountain and looking up. Seeing the Grand Canyon and looking down. First time looking through a telescope or seeing the latest NASA pictures on your computer. First time being on the ocean beyond the site of land. Experiencing a beautiful piece of art or music performance.

I am sure we have all had similar experiences. There is something in our human nature which causes our breath to catch, our hearts to skip a beat, our imaginations to reel, when we are in the midst of something great. Finding ourselves in the presence of a physical object like a mountain or contemplating an idea like the vastness of the universe, can make our heads and hearts dizzy as we wonder, “How is such a thing possible?” Those are powerful moments. So powerful in fact, people intentionally seek out moments of awe which make them feel their smallness.

Those amazing moments before God can impact us for the better. They can keep us humble and direct us toward faith and trust. Everyday we all make countless decisions. Decisions such as what, when and how much to eat. The best route to take to work on a particular day. When to go to bed. Whether or not we should buy that thing we’ve been thinking about. What outfit we should wear. Which house chores we should do first. Scheduling our time while accounting for our family’s needs. On and on it goes. We make so many decisions in the course of a day it can give us the impression that we are in control. However, when we take a few steps back from the puddle of our lives and shift our gaze to the vastness and power of the ocean or gaze upward to behold the stars in the sky, we are reminded of our place in the universe, and of just how small and powerless that place is. We are reminded that for all our decisions, determining, and striving, we control very little. For some this causes an existential dread. But as children of the God who created this universe, I hope dread gives way to humility and a greater trust in the Lord. A greater trust in God gives rise to unshakable peace. We might not be able to control very much in the grand scheme of things but we don’t need to. Our Creator and Savior rules over everything, and he travels the roads of our lives right by our side and within our hearts. From that place of awe and trust in God we can stand and face the violent oceans and look up at the impassable mountains and yet proclaim with the hymnist Horatio Spafford, “It is well with my soul.”

On the other hand though, the pursuit of the grand can make us lose sight of the trees while chasing dreams of the forest. Our lives typically are not filled with the grand. Those awe inspiring, mountain top moments are usually few and far between. Therefore, a life lived in constant pursuit of the next great thing is often a life that is empty and unfulfilling. Instead of mountain tops, our lives are usually filled with small things, mundane things. But our God is the God of all, large and small, rare and common. In fact, many things we’d call mundane are usually only mundane because of their abundance, or the frequency at which they appear, or how

long they hang around. A thing's abundance, or frequent manifestation, or steadfastness does not make that thing any less of a gift from God.

Tell a personal story where you learned to see God's blessing in something one might consider small or mundane. For example... a warm cup of tea and a blanket on a cold day. Coming to appreciate the noise in your home that sometimes drives your crazy, when your kids went off to school for the first time, or away to camp or off to college and suddenly your home gets way too quiet. Being thankful for internet access which lets you connect with distant friends and hear news from around the world, and saves a lot of time and gas via mobile banking and online shopping. Coming to appreciate good health and mobility because of that one time something happened and you found yourself very sick, in pain, or bedridden for a period of time. Or perhaps being blessed by a person who is barely an acquaintance but who you see frequently, when they unexpectedly stepped up and supported you in a time of need.

I am sure you have had similar experiences where you have been greatly blessed by the small and ordinary. The abundant, little things in life can be quite powerful, if we take time to notice them and give thanks for them.

What applies to us individually on this subject also applies to the Church, for the Church is each of us together. We as a Church can be humbled by the grand and thus be driven to accept greater reliance on God, strengthening our faith and coming to know a deeper peace.

But, as a Church we can also make the same error we sometimes make as individuals. The Church can get trapped in a life of chasing after all that "grand" it believes to be out there somewhere, while completely missing the blessings God continually showers down upon it. This can cause a congregation to experience the very same existential dread one might experience as an individual. "This universe is such a big place, what are we but an infinitesimal, powerless Church? What good can we possibly do?" In fact, the universe doesn't even have to be a factor for this depressed outlook to take hold. Maybe we log on to our favorite social media app or website and see the amazing programs the megachurch down the road has to offer. We see their grand building and hear about their amazing bathrooms complete with attendants that hand out breath mints and cologne. Rumors around town suggest there is a Greek bath in there somewhere. Then come Sunday you look around at the smaller gathering in our sanctuary and your heart gets heavy. You invest an evening to serve your Church by attending that month's Trustees' meeting only to be saddened and made afraid by the increasingly meager checking account and what that may mean for the future of your beloved Community. You and other members walk the halls of the church and notice many things are lacking when compared to the grand, the awe, and the mountain tops. One might mumble, "What's the point in trying to keep going?" "What can we possibly do to cure the monumental problems of our society?" "This Church has nothing to offer." And thus the existential dread descends upon a congregation, robbing it of its warmth, joy and its life. Peace is gone.

If this sounds even vaguely familiar, take heart. There is a cure for this terrible state. The cure for this dis-ease in the individual, is the same cure for its communal manifestation.

Take your eyes off the monumental and begin to notice the little things. The trivial things. The old things. The things gathering dust in the closet. The things you walk past but never see. The things you depend on frequently but whose value is never considered. As you slowly begin to take note of the small and mundane, give thanks to God for each of those gifts, for gifts they truly are. Not a dismissive or hollow, "Thanks, God" but truly consider why you are thankful for each of those little blessings. You and the rest of this congregation will start to notice that God has not left you destitute, but has surrounded you with all the resources you need to love your neighbors. Sometimes we just lose focus, or worse yet, we lose hope, and fail to notice and be grateful for what is right under our noses. The oak tree is already in the acorn. So take notice of and give thanks for those little blessings. Then put them to work out there in the harvest fields.