

Holy Moments: Celebrating the Gifts of Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 June 2022

Preacher: Pastor Jennifer Stamm

[0 : 0 0] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Good morning. It's good to see you on this beautiful day and it's summer.

And anybody in the education world here this morning? It's summer. Some people, it's summer forever, right? Because we get to, Elizabeth Valentine gets to have summer forever because she retired.

[3 : 2 8] Congratulations. And we thank you for taking some time out to be in this cool space with us for worship.

And we welcome those who are with us online. It's just a beautiful day in the neighborhood. So the peace of Christ be with you. Let us worship the Lord.

Would you stand and sing with us as we sing For the Beauty of the Earth and Indescribable.

For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth over and around us lies.

Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

[4 : 4 9] For the beauty of each hour, of the day and of the night. Hill and veil and tree and flower, Sun and moon and stars of light.

Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of the joy of the year and I, for the heart and mind's delight. For the heart and mind's delight, for the mystic harmony, linking sense to sound and sight.

Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of the joy of the grace, for the joy of the human love. Brother, sister, parent, child, friends on earth and friends above.

[6 : 0 5] For all gentle thoughts and love, for all gentle thoughts and loud. Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For thy church that evermore, lifted holy hands above. Offering upon every shore, her pure sacrifice of love.

Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For thy selfless gift divine to the world so freely give.

For that great, great love of thy grace, for that great, great love of thine. Peace on earth and joy in heaven. Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

[7 : 3 5] To the light, great love of thy grace, for that great, great, great, great. From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea.

- [14 : 53] And my husband can also attest I was a mess through the whole day before doing that. Couldn't sleep the night before.
- Tried to lay down. Could not sleep. I was a total mess. But I did get through it. And later that week one of the pastors at that time made a remark.
- And he referred to that first risk as a big step in faith. So as people of faith we know that we all have different gifts that God has placed with us.
- And regardless of the type God calls us to use them. To do his work. To use them for his glory. Even when we feel almost overcome by fear and worry.
- You know not knowing whether what we offer will be good enough or adequate. Having no guarantees about how others will receive what we do.
- [15 : 58] But we trust God. We try to muster up a little bit of courage. And do what we feel in our hearts. And leave the rest to God. And as part of the song says is we wait for God.
- And we offer all of ourselves. And try to do the best that we can. And know that God's love will fill us and sustain us. Even when we feel shaky and empty.
- So this is Hungry. Hungry I come to you for.
- I know all this is fine. I am empty but I know your love does not remember you.
- So I'm ready for you. And I am ready for you. And I am ready for you. I am falling on my knees.
- [17 : 23] The far and all will have me. Jesus the wrong. And this heart is living for you. I am ready for you. I am ready for you. I am ready for you.
- Speaking for you. I am ready for you. But now your love. I am ■■■ I know your touch restores my life So I wait for you And I wait for you I'm falling on my knees Offering all of me Jesus, your hopeless heart is living for So I wait for you
- And I wait for you I'm falling on my knees Offering all of me Jesus, your all This heart is living for Jesus, your all This heart is living for And I wait for you And I wait for you Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. O God, we give you thanks for gifts offered from the heart, for hungry souls and hungry earth seeking your nourishment, your water, your spirit.
- [20 : 53] May our lives be a testimony to our gratitude. And may our offering of ourselves sing and praise and worship you in thanksgiving.
- In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. As we gather for this time of prayer, you heard already from Song that Nancy is not feeling well.
- And hopefully that will get better over the coming days. And she's doing what she needs to do, which is resting. We want to lift up Jan Hodge, who is going to be having surgery on Tuesday.
- And just want to know, are there other people or things that we would like to lift up, either in praise or in seeking God's presence?
- Yes, John. Yes, John. Teresa has a procedure on Thursday and we cover the prayers for that. And we're trusting the Lord that this is going to be a big coming point.
- [22 : 03] Thank you. So Teresa's having a procedure on Thursday. Yes. So we pray for that to go well. Anything else? Yes, Becky.
- Becky. Okay. I've had a reaction to that today. You'll see me probably holding. But prayer, that heals. And then a really big blessing, you know, all giggle.

You've all heard about my toe, Buddy. Well, Buddy laid over 200 eggs. And so now I have 200 grand tadpoles. You have 200 what?

Grand tadpoles. Tadpoles. Aha. So Becky's had a reaction to some medication and she is going to have frogs everywhere.

Yes. Our granddaughter, our oldest granddaughter, is getting married this week. Wow. Congratulations. Where is she getting married? In Virginia. In Virginia. So the granddaughter getting married.

[23 : 11] I went to a wedding with my husband yesterday. And the bride's mother, who's a pediatrician, made her first ever wedding cake for her daughter's wedding.

She's a pediatrician in California. So she came here early enough to make the cake. It was one of those, like, and then each tier was four layers.

Talk about trusting. Talk about trusting. They got into the reception and then they just backed away and prayed.

It was all good. Let us come before God in prayer. Oh, Lord, you know us and you know what's going on in our lives.

You know the places that are tender and the places that are joyful. The things that we giggle about and the things that we moan or go silent about.

[24 : 11] You've heard us call out to you for those needs we have named. You know the ones we haven't named. We lift up those who struggle in our community, in our country, in our world.

We know that you are such a big God that you can be present to all these places. We don't understand it. We can barely be present to our own sometimes.

We give thanks for a great and wondrous God who can touch with healing and hope, celebrate in retirements and birthdays and babies and weddings.

We know you are a tender God who can hold hands for surgeries and procedures. Help us to trust.

Help us to trust and follow you. Help us to close our eyes and imagine you guiding our steps, giving us words for our mouths and thoughts for our heads.

[25 : 31] helping for our hands and feet and love for our neighbors. Be present. Be healing.

Show us in the glory of your creation how wondrous you are day after day after day. In the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

Good morning. Good morning. So, thank you for overcoming any fears that you ever had because it's just such a joy to hear you sing. Love it. Yeah. I can't imagine what we'd be like without you and your singing because it's so much from God.

It's just beautiful. Thank you so much. This morning I'm reading from the book of Luke, chapter 12, 27. Consider how the wildflowers grow.

[26 : 45] They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. And then from Psalm 148.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise him in the heights above. Praise him, all his angels.

Praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon. Praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.

Let them praise the name of the Lord. For at his command they were created. And he established them forever and ever. He issued a decree that will never pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths. Lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding.

[27 : 58] You mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle. Small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations.

You princes and all rulers on earth. Young men and women. Old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord.

For his name alone is exalted. His splendor is above the earth and the heavens. And he has raised up for his people a horn.

The praise of all his faithful servants of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the Lord. This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God.

Aesop's Fables. The Ant and the Grasshopper. There once was a grasshopper who liked to play with his flute.

[29 : 03] Then one day he met a large group of ants, all of them carrying loot.

What are you doing? Asked the grasshopper, wanting to know. We are gathering food for the winter, they replied, before it starts the snow. But the grasshopper played with his flute without a single care.

While the ants had to carry apples and peaches, and even a pear.

And the grasshopper played with his flute. Friendship ■■■ whose Ryan mind had to talk to his Soon-Sawper.

He Nobody else buys a hazel. valor meant to be a ■■■. He Nobody else buys a infinitesAU McFly-Lives who lived, if I were just joined nie models. He's been surprised. Faith He's been surprised.

[30 : 25] And will come for you and he fight to take for his remoteumba. And you will go on Kinguse. Then the grasshopper saw a berry and took it in one go.

That made the ant angry, but then it started to snow. The ant took the berry back and quickly ran away.

While the grasshopper took his flute and continued to play. Then a blizzard came around and the grasshopper had nothing to eat.

I've been waiting to use a cartoon and a sermon. So last week, Scott asked us to take a moment to consider our blessings.

So this is week two of our sermon series. And I ask you to remember that list throughout this series. Way, way back in 1996, Pepsi came out with a new campaign.

[32 : 01] Drink Pepsi, win stuff. The ads never even said what the stuff was you could win. But people flocked to the store and bought Pepsi. And maybe it doesn't matter what that stuff was, but the fact that you could win it.

There is now a saying that says, the one who dies with the most stuff wins. So we assume that stuffing our lives with more stuff is sometimes the way to be happy, successful, or content.

How's that working for you? Today we celebrate the small things. The simplicity in our lives that allows us to celebrate the beauty that is life and to grow closer to the heart of God.

It's a matter of paring down life to that simplicity, to the basics. Because that's all there is. We hear and we see through scripture a sense that the more cluttered your life is, the harder it is to make your way to God.

And the harder it is to see your path clearly. In one of our readings today, Jesus instructs us to consider the wildflowers of the field.

[33 : 21] And I want you to listen to the version of it in the message. So it's Luke 12, verses 27 through 32. Has anyone by fussing before the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch?

If fussing can't even do that, why fuss at all? Walk into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They don't fuss with their appearance.

But have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The 10 best dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

If God gives such attention to the wildflowers, most of them never even being seen, don't you think he'll attend to you? Take pride in you.

Do his best for you. What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax. Not be so preoccupied with getting. So you can respond to God's giving.

[34 : 24] So in our fable, The Ant and the Grasshopper, The Ant is praised for working hard all summer to store up provisions for the winter. The grasshopper sings away, and at summer's end, he has nothing to show for it.

The point is clear. Aesop spells it out. Those who work for today receive for tomorrow. But Jesus tells us differently.

Jesus tells us to consider the wildflowers for just the opposite reason. Wildflowers are lazy. They occupy space among grasses for no reason other than that the beauty of their colors glorifies God.

The flowers toil not, neither do they spin. We learn from these wildflowers not to worry about tomorrow. But like them, our true business on earth is not hoarding, but praise and exaltation of God.

God's creation gives us ready access to proper praise. Take a look outside. What we call nature, the flowers and the trees and the birds.

[35 : 41] God's creation reveals part of the nature of its creator. We know steadfastness because our universe is predictable.

We know surprise because of sudden rainstorms. For decades, the painter Andrew Wyeth painted his everyday surroundings, showing us ordinary objects as if for the very first time.

He once told an interviewer, I love to study the many things that grow below the corn stalks and bring them back into the studio to study the color.

If one could only catch that true color of nature, the very thought of it drives me mad. Now that's considering the wildflowers. I want to share a story with you.

And it was in the preaching today, and it took place in a classroom at Hannibal LaGrange College in Missouri back in 2002. It was the day for final exams, and the students walked into the classroom minutes before the professor arrived.

[36 : 48] Everyone in the room was doing what we all do with their last-minute cramming, and the professor enters and took a few minutes to review. Most of it was familiar to the students, but there were some things that no one ever remembered hearing.

The professor responded with what sends cold chills up every student's spine. This is in your textbook, and you are responsible for all of that content on the exam.

So the time came for the test. He gave the word. Every student took up their pen and turned over the test. And I want you to hear what Denise Banderman, in her very own words, said.

She said, But I couldn't believe it. To my astonishment, every answer on the test was filled in. My name was even written in the exam in red ink.

A wordless stir traveled like a wave over the class as each student looked at their completed exam. On the bottom of the last page of every test was this note from the professor.

[37 : 56] All of the answers on your test are correct. You will receive an A on the final exam. The reason you passed the test is because the creator of the test took it for you.

All of the work you did in preparation for this test did not help you get the A. Think about that. All of the work on you has already been done by our creator.

You don't need to do anything but follow where he leads us. Those aren't just the experiences in other people's lives.

I'm sure there's not a single person in this room who hasn't experienced an outrageous, lavish, unexpected, or undeserved kindness.

What's more, we experience those every single day. They're poured out over us constantly. I know this, and I can declare it with total confidence because of one unchanging truth.

[39 : 02] God is good. If you want to see God for who he really is, here's a good starting point. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

It's easy as Christians to think that the big things are important. It's easy to focus on those big churches, and sometimes they're shown to be more important than small churches.

If there's a class and 60 people show up, oh, that's an important class. But if 12 people show up, what are you doing wrong? What are you teaching?

Is it not so important? Now, there's nothing wrong with big events, and a lot of them are used by God, and they're excellent things that feed into our lives.

But it's those small things that are important, those little things that matter. It's not just in spiritual life. It's in the way that God has created all of life.

[40 : 02] The same God created the physical reality that created our spiritual reality. And when we look out at creation, we see big things are invested with beauty and complexity and importance.

But so are those small things. When we see galaxies, there's incredible beauty there. And also the nebula. And when we see these through a telescope, there's all of that beauty and importance.

But even a flower is complex. And each part of that flower has an important part to do. And we go down to the size of a pollen grain and all of the shapes that are made up to them.

On that incredibly tiny scale, there's all the shape, all this beauty. And all of those things become incredibly important to the way that we live our lives.

We see that same pattern in our spiritual life. God seems to enjoy the beauty of the very small as well as the large things. And that's good news for us because our life isn't exactly overwhelmed with the large things spiritually.

[41 : 20] Most of what we engaged in is fairly small stuff. It's a fact that most of us are not going to affect millions of people, have impact on tens of thousands.

That's not the way our life is going to work. Most of our life is work, meals, time with family, and time with friends.

There's nothing earth-shaking in that pattern. But it's what the stuff of our life is made out of. And that's important to God. Jesus teaches us the value of little things.

He shows us that in his own actions. Jesus was given this commission by God that his life and his death and his resurrection was going to impact the world.

And what does he do for the critical years of his ministry? He invests himself primarily in 12 people. He didn't do a worldwide search to find the best 12.

[42 : 25] He didn't post ads out. He took the 12 that came out of a few small villages in Israel. Little things. Jesus didn't ignore those little things.

He could be seen going on the road, going to a place where he knows he's going to have the opportunity to speak to hundreds or maybe even thousands of people. He's going to a synagogue to have a special time of teaching.

And on the way, Jesus is willing to stop and let the little children come to him. And his disciples said, Jesus, you're too important for that. And he said, no, let the children come to me.

It's those little things. He would be on his way, important things at the end of his journey. And he was willing to stop and heal one woman.

Stop and heal one blind person. Jesus wasn't afraid of those little things. He recognized how important they are. And he even did that in his teaching.

[43 : 34] He shows us how important they are. It's Jesus who taught us the importance of a glass of cold water. That even a cup of cold water given in his name to the least of the people that we encounter is something that God values so much that he considers its service to himself.

A little thing that's so honored in the eyes of God. So we're in the second week of our blessed to be blessed. Blessings that reveal a sense of holy in every moment, everything in every person.

Jesus shows us the same thing. When Jesus asked, What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?

It's like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his garden. And it grew and it became a tree. And the birds of the air perched on its branches. Again, he asked, What shall I compare the kingdom of God to?

It's like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour and worked it all through the dough. Jesus has just healed and he's taken the opportunity to have people react to what he said and what he's done.

[44 : 55] People are excited because they saw the power of God at work. But the fact is that what he was doing at that point was just one day.

One healing. One person. And he points to the things that are happening among his 12 disciples. And the things that are happening among the community.

And he's telling people of what God is going to do through the gospel. He points to that image of the mustard seed. That tiny, tiny little seed.

And yet the plant in the Middle East there, because of the climate, can grow to bush size or even eight feet tall. It's big enough so that the birds will actually go in and roost there and seek protection among its leaves.

And he then goes on to talk about yeast, that living bit of yeast that they would take out of one loaf. And keep it for the next day. When they would start the next loaf and put that in.

[46 : 00] And even though they couldn't see what was working, it worked as magic and identical to the last loaf. They knew something inside was at work.

And if they took just that little piece and put it in the next loaf, everything would turn out okay. Our lives are filled with little things, but it's so easy to overlook them.

It's easy to view them as interruptions or hassles. It's our next meeting, and we're hurrying down the hall, the next decision that we need to take.

And someone comes to us, and the interaction that we have at that point, we sometimes view as an interruption. It's going to delay us. It might not be important to us at that time.

It might break our train of thought. We might not be as ready for that meeting as we would like, but it's a little thing. Or you're preparing a celebration and trying to get all the details ready.

[47 : 03] You're trying to get that real special event, and you have a child that comes up to you stressed or angry. And it's about putting together all those details.

So we take time, and it might come at as bad time to us, but we stop and listen. It's easy to live our life hurrying through, but Jesus didn't look down on the little things, and neither should we, because there's such great power in little things.

You see, the DNA of the whole plant was in that mustard seed millions of times over. There's such incredible power in the small things that God does, and what God does has uses that ultimately have an impact way beyond us.

God delights in the little things. He works in the little things. There was a woman named Sissy Davis who was asked by her pastor to make some burial gowns for children who were born prematurely at a local hospital, and these children didn't thrive, and they passed away.

The hospitals didn't know what to do with these families because they were so tiny, and normal baby clothes didn't fit. And so it was a little thing for Sissy because she was an accomplished seamstress, and she could make very quickly incredible little outfits that were absolutely beautiful.

[48 : 38] It was a little thing for Sissy, but God had bigger plans for her in this event. Because right now, there's a whole ministry nationally called Threads of Love.

They have over 200 chapters, and every year these chapters of women are sewing to give away tens of thousands of items to hospitals, to parents who are grieving in neonatal units.

A little thing. And God had a vision for something so much bigger. I think of a retired pastor, Gail Lewis, who encouraged and helped develop many local pastors through the Buffalo course of study.

She invested time and friendships cultivating those future leaders. And pastors Kathy and Scott, who take time to listen and answer when I have some pretty silly questions at times or sit down to a cup of tea.

All of these things can be seen as little things. It's not the big plan. It's not the big program. But sometimes ministry happens when we're still planning our big programs.

[49 : 52] You know, sometimes we've got to realize that the little things are not what we do on the way to the will of God. It's the little things, the interruptions, the hassles, the unexpected things.

Those things are the will of God for us. So let's not ignore those little things. Have those conversations in the hall or in the kitchen.

Have thank you cards. Make phone calls. Deliver casseroles and cakes. The extra time that we spend with people. Fixing a light switch, cutting somebody's grass, or just treating them nice when they play with you.

Giving hugs. It's those little things. And that little mustard seed, that little thing, was all the DNA for the full expression and the full impact of that plant.

In God's hands, the little things we can results in things that we never anticipated. Little things matter so much.

[50 : 59] The problem is, is that we can't predict in advance which ones they are. We don't get to pick and choose. It's not the way that our world is built.

The way that life is built. Little things matter, and only God knows how much, or which one is going to have the impact.

Each one of you is a treasure. How wonderful and beautifully made are you. You're created in the image of God.

Blessed be to God are each of you. Please pray with me. Holy Spirit of God, help us to be attentive to the little things in life.

Help us to just be careful not to ignore them or to view them all as hassles. But like Jesus, help us to be ready for those interruptions, ready for those additions, ready for life's changes.

[52 : 03] Those little things are on the way to big goals that we have. And so God, we commit ourselves to you and pray that you will work in us and through us.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the things that we sometimes fail to recognize is that in the celebration of the sacrament of communion, the bread, the juice, it's the simple things.

It's not fancy. It's not big and extravagant. Jesus didn't have a lightning strike to show how special this bread and this cup would be because it's in the ordinary, everyday experiences of life that God's Holy Spirit enters and makes new.

The Lord be with you. I'll also be with you. Lift up your hearts. Lift up your hearts. It is... Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

We give thanks to the Lord our God. We give thanks to the Lord our God. It is good and a joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

[53 : 44] In the beginning, when darkness covered the face of the earth and nothing but chaos, your spirit swept across the water and you spoke out just a word and light was separated from darkness.

And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ, who lived among us and knew human pain and suffering, who called all who were burdened and heavy laden and gave them rest, who healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners, who cast out demons and showed us the way to you through faith, who took our suffering upon himself, that we may be cleansed of our sins and receive eternal life.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, he gave thanks to you, and he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said, Take and eat this, all of you, in remembrance of me.

[55 : 25] When the supper was over, he took the cup. He gave thanks to you and gave it to his disciples and said, Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. And so, in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and in thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon all of us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world. That we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood.

By the same Spirit, heal us in body, mind, and spirit, cleansing away all that would separate us from you. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

[56 : 51] Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours. Almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

Let us join in the prayer that Jesus taught us. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. As we serve one another and then invite you to the table.

Just a reminder that this table doesn't belong to us. It belongs to God and all are welcome at this table. All will be offered a piece of bread which you then dip in the cup.

[58 : 00] We have prepackaged, gluten-free will be on this side and the other stations will be bread with gluten in them. So please, when it comes time for us to invite you, come as you feel led and receive this gift of Holy Communion.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[60 : 23] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[62 : 53] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[65 : 23] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[69 : 53] Thank you.