

**A Hammer, a Nail and a Piece of Paper
(Can change the world)
Mark 4:30 – 33; Acts 9:1 - 22**

Introduction

So that's our readings this morning – my question to you is what's the link between the two?

Have a chat about with the person beside you.

When Jesus tells this story a mustard seed he isn't doing so to give us gardening tips.

He's talking about God's kingdom, God's good and beautiful and loving rule.

He says that God's good and beautiful and loving rule will begin in a small way, even the smallest of ways.

I mean, Jesus was telling this to a group of at least how many?

Well, 12 men and number of women that only grew to 120 by the time of his resurrection.

But he is saying, this group will change the world in my name.

And today it numbers at least 2.5 billion – which I would say is a conservative number that does factor in the tremendous growth in South America, Africa and Asia.

Then there's the story of Saul and Ananias.

Ananias in the story told to do what?

To go and pray for Saul – is it always easy to pray for people? No.

And Ananias' reaction is what? "I don't wanna do it."

The main reason he doesn't want to do it is because of who he believes Saul to be.

In the NIV it's all very polite:

"Lord, I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to those in Jerusalem who believe in you. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

Do you want a paraphrase?

“Lord, you can’t be serious.

Everybody’s talking about this man and the terrible things he’s been doing, his reign of terror against your people in Jerusalem! And now he’s shown up here with papers from the Chief Priest that give him license to do the same to us.”

Saul was a hard-liner. He was fanatical. He was an ultra-nationalist.

He was an ultra-conservative, super-orthodox, pharisaical Jew.

For Ananias, Saul was one scary son of an Israelite.

But Ananias does what he is asked to do.

And then we read what?

Saul is healed. Saul is baptised. And Saul begins to preach about Jesus the Messiah. Saul is a changed person.

But what about Ananias?

Well, we never hear about Ananias in Scripture again.

His part takes up a total of seven verses in Scripture.

But look at the result: Saul became Paul and Paul became the Apostle Paul.

And the Apostle Paul went on to preach the good news of Jesus throughout the Mediterranean and the world was turned upside down, seeing lives transformed by Jesus.

And we are still reading his Holy Spirit inspired words today.

Almost 505 years ago, a massive event happened in history that involved this guy:



That guy did this:



Almost 505 years ago in 1517, Martin Luther went to his local church and nailed a list of questions and statements to the door.

This list called the '95 Theses' stated that forgiveness comes from God alone, that salvation is found in Jesus alone, and that the Bible is the supreme authority of the church.

Luther didn't intend to start his own church.

He didn't set out to form a new movement.

But four years later he was excommunicated from the church but by then his ideas had changed the world.

- If you have Bible in a language that you can read and understand, that can traced back to this moment.
- If you have where the pastor or minister leads, prayers and preaches in your native language, you can trace it back to this moment.
- If you have some involvement in the Sunday worship, you can trace it back to this moment.
- If you sing together in Sunday worship, you can trace it back to this moment.
- If you know that Jesus on the cross for your sins, you can trace it back to this moment.
- If you know that you can have a personal, one to one relationship with Jesus as your King and Forgiver of your sins, you can trace it back to this moment.

Luther had a brilliant mind – yes. He was able to study and read the Scriptures in multiple languages when the vast majority of people couldn't – yes.

But what made the difference?

All Luther had was a hammer and a nail and a piece of paper with some writing on it.

So here's the thing: even the smallest of beginnings can change the world in Jesus' name.

And often we don't know what those smallest of beginnings might be.

Ananias is never heard from again but his name is etched into eternity. Luther changed the world with a hammer, a nail and piece of paper, and what he did is also etched into eternity.

There is a lot of talk about followers of Jesus and people in general changing the world.

And often we're told that's what we're all meant to be.

There is this great push, especially on younger people, to find significance in changing the world.

You know, "Be a change agent!"

There will be some, a few who do, like Martin Luther.

But most of us, if we're honest, will think, "I can't change the world.

The world's too big. It has so many significant issues going on – how can make a difference?"

Yet when it doesn't happen some Christians can become disappointed that they don't change the world.

(In fact there is increasing evidence that the incessant fix the problems of the world and *to be somebody*, especially in an education environment and on social media, is an underlying cause of the massive increase in anxiety issues).

So what *do* we do?

Well here's the thing: the smallest of beginnings can change the world, but even if it doesn't change the world, *it can change someone else's world and their eternity.*

Our actions, our words, which may seem small and trivial too those looking on, can become in God's hands a decisive moment in someone's life.

There is the true of an 83 year old woman whose failing health meant that had become a shut in – she wasn't able to leave home anymore. However her mind keen and so she contacted a human rights group asking if she could help in some way.

They gave her the name of someone wrongfully imprisoned in Indonesia. With pen in hand she began to write and write and write... countless letters to prison overseers, government officials and family members.

Then some months later she received a letter from the prisoner:

“They kept seeing and hearing my name. I was lost. I was nothing to them. They had locked me away for years for no cause.

I thank God for you my woman. You kept my name alive.

When they finally released me they said my file was two inches thick with correspondence. Most of it was yours. They said the file was too much trouble for one prisoner.”

I've told my story before:

In 1989, during my fifth form year, we had a guest speaker at school assembly. I do not remember what was said or who his name was. However after the assembly I received a small, little blue covered New Testament with tiny writing.

From that night onwards I read that New Testament from cover to cover and back again.

As I read and re-read that little book I encountered a Person called Jesus, a Person so unlike any I had ever encountered before.

And I say I encountered Jesus because I didn't just read about Him but I came to actually know Him as a real and living Person.

At the back of that little Bible was a prayer that you could recite so that Jesus would become your Leader and Forgiver.

Before I even said that prayer I was already a believer in Jesus and I basically said to make it official.

I can't remember why they were visiting my high school or what any of them said, but that small act of giving me a New Testament literally changed my life.

It's also changed my eternity.

I do not know if I would be here except for that small act.

And remember the story of Albert McMakin?

Albert McMakin was a farm hand who had a life changing experience with Jesus Christ at church meeting. And among his many acquaintances was teenager by the name of Billy.

Billy's life revolved around one thing: relationships with girls in his town. Albert wondered how to persuade the Billy to along to the one of the meetings.

So what he does is he says to Billy, "I need to you drive my truck to the next meeting. There's a heap of people coming along on the tray and I need to look after them. So I need you to drive the truck."

And Billy does. And when they get to the meeting Albert says to Billy, "Why don't you come inside?" Billy goes inside and there he is absolutely captivated by what he sees and hears. An altar call is given and Billy responds and he too had a life changing, life transforming experience with Jesus Christ.

And of course, you know the Billy I'm referring too, right?

Billy Graham.

Billy Graham has spoken and preached to more people about Jesus than anyone else in history.

Everyone knows about Billy Graham but the heck knows about Albert McMakin???

I didn't; I'd never heard of him.

But Albert McMakin's small act changed Billy Graham's world and in turn because of that one small act – ordinary act – Billy Graham changed the planet.

And Albert McMakin? His name is etched into eternity.

We have the greatest example in our Master.

When God saw what He'd made going to wrack and ruin, He took a walk across our universe and came to this planet.

This is a visited planet.

But rather come in power and glory, He went small, into the womb of a nervous teenager called Mary. Then nine months later He was born in a shed for animals in the middle of nowhere.

And out of the smallest of beginnings emerged a rescue operation unparalleled in all of human history.

A hammer, a nail and a piece of paper can change the world.

A pen.
The little blue covered Bible.
A simple invitation to church.
Praying with someone.
It's that neighbour we invite into our homes.

*In Jesus' hands, even the smallest of beginnings can change the world;
Even the smallest act can change someone's world.
And that can be etched on into eternity.*

So I my final thought this morning is this: don't ignore those small, inconsequential ideas that sometimes pop into our heads, seemingly from nowhere.
You do not know when God is speaking.

Let's pray.