

Today I want to talk about **two concepts**

- That are **on the surface**
- Pretty easy to **get our minds around:**
- **Bigness /Smallness**

What's **not as easy** is **accepting**

- **Jesus' understanding** of how **one is to live a life.**

In the text, let's start with "**bigness**". Today we hear Jesus once again **bemoan** the **religious elite.**-

They make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, to have people call them rabbi.

You ask "What are **phylacteries?**"

- Because **phylacteries** play into **this discussion.**

A **phylactery** is

- A small **charm box** that's **sown onto a garment.**
- The box **contains parchment**
- With words **of the Torah** written on it.

Phylacteries and the **aforementioned tassels**

- Were **sown onto vestments**;
- These **decorative additions** denoting
- A heightened **sense of authority**

The **Jewish religious establishment**

- Seemingly **had lost the memo** that said
- They, the **religious bigwigs**, should of **all people**
- Make an effort **to live humbly**.

Today, **clergy** have similar **walking orders**-

- That is, **we are not to be about the power of the office**

Yet what do we do

- **Bishops wear big hats**
- And even though it says
- **Not to give** the **religious leaders preferential seating**
- **What do we do?**
- The church sets us up with **big wig chairs**.

And it's not **just priests and clergy**,

- We **humans love power and prestige**, to **parade** it around.

But when **we do it in God's name**

- It **looks very bad**; it looks, well... **hypocritical**.

The **long short** of it is that

- When we **puff ourselves** up and try
- To look **Big**, and **important**;
- The **bigger** the **eventual burst**.

So....**Bigness**.....

- It's **not about size** it's a **state of mind**.

Now let's look at "**smallness**":

The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Here Jesus speaks to **a true life in God looks like**.

- Not only is **there no puffing up the ego**,
- But an **implied deflation**
- Of our **desire for power and prestige**.

Jesus, is saying that

- "In **the kingdom of God, small is beautiful.**"

So how **can we work** on **making ourselves small**?

Well one way to **get made small**

- Is **pretty unavoidable**.

If you are a **living breathing human being,**

- There are times when the **vagaries of life**
- Will **make us mall.**

We are going along, **everything's ok**

- And **what happens.....**

We or someone we love gets sick

- We **lose a job or a business**
- There's no **shortage of impacting life events**
- That **can bring us down to size**

And don't we know it

- This kind of **deflation** is **not so fun.**

Maybe a **better question** is

- How can we **attain to smallness**
- Without **so much pain?**

I'll **get personal** here and tell you some **avenues to smallness**
I've **stumbled upon.**

Back when **Miles and Graham were little**

- A family **traditions** was
- **Reading books** before bed.

We'd gather in **Graham's** room.

- The **night's reader**, either me or Barclay,
- **Snuggled** between Graham and Miles,
- With the **other adult** listening on the floor.

Graham's room was a pretty **typical** kid's room

- With **legos** and **action figures** strewn about;
- It's most **striking** feature **hanging** from the ceiling.

There, he had positioned **big, brightly colored** paper mache **models** of the **nine planets** and the **sun** configured into **Graham's version** of the **solar system**.

That is what I **found myself looking up at**,

- On **one particular day** I'd come home **full of worry** and **anxiety** about what I thought **were big problems**.

And as I lay there in the **fading light** of my **hectic** day,

- I was caught up in **reverie** at the **incomprehensible bigness** of **God's world represented** in **miniature** above me.
- **Moons, planets, gravity**, the **life force that is the sun-** and **they all fit together-** and for some reason, it **just kind blew my mind**

Looking at those planets made me reflect

- About the **insignificance** of the **problems** and **worries** that had minutes before **loomed** so **large** in the day **that just passed**.
- I was somehow **right-sized- everything in my life shrunk down** to its **proper perspective**.

I was able to say

- “**Gosh** as much **as I’d like to think the sun and the moon revolve around me-**
- They **just don’t**.
- I **became small**.

And in that **right-sizing**,

- I let go of what I was **carrying-** my **plans**, my **image** of **myself**, my **fears**; and I had **peace**.

Do **you** ever have those moments when God’s **bigness** and your **smallness** are brought to light?

And when I say **small** I don’t mean **puny** or **small-minded**.

I mean small as in-

- **Free** of **attachments**,
- **Small** as in **humble**,

- **Small** as in: Jeff is not the **center of the universe** but a part of something bigger.

I realized that activities that **made me "small"** were worth **seeking out**.

It was then I realized I was **already doing** things like this.

- I've always loved **ocean swimming**- going on long **point to point** swims

Swimming in the ocean makes me feel **small**.

- When I **set off from the beach toward open water, you are entering into a: giant mystery**
- Where **my power** is **nothing** compared to the **immenseness of what is before me**
- A place where I have **to surrender** to a **new set of rules**

A place that you can't help **emerge from** having **learned something** about yourself

There is **something cleansing** about

- Being **a speck of dust** in the **great canopy of God's Creation;**

How else?

- You get **small** when you leave **your border and go on a trip**; you **cede** a lot of your **power**.
- You get **small** when you see there is a **big huge world** out there, a world in **a mess of hurt**.

And I haven't mentioned prayer yet. At its most basic level prayer is about saying

- **"I am small Lord and you are big- thank you or help me.**

And in **becoming small, more humble**, we find ourselves **living the kingdom** life

- In our **smallness** we can **be aware of the immensity of God's love and mercy**. We can **be raised to a largeness** of life **we never thought possible**.

Amen.