

Jesus Sweats ALL the Small Stuff
Matthew 4:12-23
Epiphany 3 January 19, 2023 Pastor Pufahl

For today, I wanted to see if you are observant or not. Are you ready? In the preservice “Welcome” slide on the wall, there was a picture of a still lake of water. In that lake there were birds. How many birds were there? Ok, it was a trick question – there were no birds.

Maybe you have heard the saying, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” What does that statement mean? It basically means don’t worry about the things that you really don’t need to worry about. Don’t worry about the paint job if there is a fire in the room. Don’t worry about your hair when you are choking on your food. And maybe a little less morbid of an example, don’t worry about who is going to play in the Super Bowl this year when you have a newborn baby to celebrate! Don’t sweat the small stuff; concentrate on the more important things and think about them.

I wonder if I would have told you in the very beginning of the service that I would have an observational question for you, perhaps you would have paid closer attention to all the details. Maybe you would have looked around the church a little closer. Maybe you would have tried to memorize details. If I would have asked you how many stained-glass windows we have, you probably could answer that question (but did you include the ones in the nursery?). Maybe as I asked you the question I did, you didn’t think that was fair. Maybe you weren’t even sitting and settling in by the time that slide came and went. Well, if before I read this lesson to you today, would you have even known that Jesus went to Zebulun and Naphtali? I probably would not have been able to answer that question either. It is a very tiny detail in the grand scheme of Jesus’ entire life and everything he did for us. Don’t sweat the small stuff, right? Well, I want us to see instead what Jesus thinks about that saying. He would never say that he does not sweat the small stuff. Instead, Jesus sweats all the small stuff.

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. ¹³ Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— ¹⁴ to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁵ “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶ the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

Jesus spent much time teaching the people God’s Word. He spent much time teaching how we are to live our lives. One of the areas of life was God’s expectations of us. He demanded that the people keep God’s commandments...PERFECTLY. If you look at that section, there are several times when those who followed Jesus tried to explain they were doing that – they were living a perfect life. Maybe they were trying to convince Jesus they were pretty good. Or maybe in that discussion, they were trying to convince themselves that what they were doing was ok. They were trying to make it seem like they had lived their lives perfectly; that they kept all the commands perfectly. Jesus, however, pointed out to them that was not true, just like Jesus could do with each of us. Think about it. Have you ever said something bad, or lusted, or been greedy? No matter how good a life we feel we have led, we can see we have not been perfect.

What would Jesus say to us? Sometimes we wish that Jesus would not sweat all the small stuff. Sometimes we wish that he did not see everything. We may even try to act just like those followers and try to convince ourselves that we are not that bad. We know the bad sins...murder, adultery, theft, and so many other unspeakable sins we do not even want to mention. We have not done those things; so, we must be good. We must be ok in God’s eyes. But the problem is that Jesus sweats all the small stuff. Think how Jesus thinks. Have we REALLY kept the commandments perfectly? Not according to human standards, but according to God’s standards of PERFECTION! Jesus even gives us a warning in our lesson as he said, **“Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is NEAR!”** No matter how much we try to convince ourselves that we are not that bad, we are not supposed to

convince ourselves; rather we are to convince God. Can you convince God that you are not that bad? Can you convince God that you have kept his commandments perfectly? I know that I cannot; I can't even come close. I am even ashamed of myself for even trying to think that I could. Jesus sees it all. He does not say, "Well, don't worry about that sin because it was not that bad. Don't sweat the small stuff." No – each and every sin is bad. Each and every sin should separate us from God and send us to hell!

And that is where my point comes up. Do you remember the two places that our lesson said Jesus was going to come from, where Jesus was going to live? I know I need to look because this detail is so small...it is Zebulun and Naphtali. Why is that such a big deal? Listen to verse 14 because that tells us why it was such a big deal: **“to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah.”**

I am sure you were not trying to pay close attention to our slides today to count how many birds there were (or weren't). If I warned you I was going to ask you a question like that, you probably would be looking for the bigger details. It is typical.

Please don't get me wrong; Jesus also thought about all the big stuff too. He had to keep God's law perfectly. He had to be completely innocent. He had to die on the cross. He had to rise again. All those were very important. Those details make up the Gospel lessons. Those details are so important for us to remember as we tell others about Jesus.

But Jesus also sweats ALL the small stuff, too. For thousands of years, Jesus was prophesied about. For thousands of years, God's people had the opportunity to hear about all the details of this Messiah. Remember Christmas? The chief priest and teachers of the law when confronted by King Herod after the Wise Men appear, knew the details about this King, this Messiah: **When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.** ⁵ **“In Bethlehem in Judea,”** they replied, **“for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”**

Jesus sweats all the small stuff to show the world that he was the Messiah. That included the fact that he lived in Zebulun and Naphtali for a time. He kept that prophecy, even that tiny detail, perfectly so that he could keep another prophecy perfectly. **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”** Jesus sweats all the small stuff, all the details of his life in order that he could be the Savior of the world. He sweats all the smaller details so that his heel could have been struck on the cross – where he took our sins, the big ones and the small ones – away for good.

And he still does sweat the small stuff. But this time it is not to see all the sins we commit. Instead, it is to show us that we are forgiven for all the sins we commit – every time! Maybe you feel like God sometimes does not care about you; that he does not listen to you; that you are just one tiny speck living in this world of nearly eight billion other little specks, walking around. But that is not the way it is to God. He still sweats the “small” stuff. When Jesus was on this earth, as he lived, as he died, as he rose again – he thought of you, specifically. You are not small to God. And Jesus sweats all the small stuff, the small details, so that he can say to you, “You are forgiven. You are my child. You have heaven – forever!”

No, we may not always pay attention to all the small details around us or even all the smaller details about our Savior Jesus. But Jesus did...specifically for you, to save you, to forgive you, to give you heaven! Amen.