

THE 57 CENT SOLUTION
Endowment Sunday –Communion –May 5, 2013 –2 Corinthians 9: 6-15
The Church of the Covenant

With 57 cents God can change the world. In Philadelphia prior to the turn of the previous century there was a minister by the name of Russell Herman Conwell who served a small but growing church called Temple Baptist Church. There was a little girl named Hattie May Wiatt who was trying to go to Sunday School but who was turned away because there was no room for her. The pastor realized that perhaps the real reason was because she came from the wrong side of the tracks, so to speak, and had a shabby, unkempt appearance. The pastor discovered her crying outside the church, "I can't go to Sunday School", she sobbed. The kind pastor found her a place in Sunday School. But little Hattie May couldn't stop thinking about all the little children who weren't in Sunday School and who should be. (Beloved, there are a lot of little Hattie May Wiatts here in Washington and on the wrong side of the tracks, who should be in Sunday School, but are awaiting our invitation to be here). Unfortunately, the little girl contracted diphtheria and passed away. Her parents asked Pastor Conwell to conduct her funeral. They went through her little cracked red plastic pocketbook and discovered two things –57 pennies and a note in a small child's handwriting that said: "This is to help build the little church bigger so more children can go to Sunday School." For two years she had saved this love offering and her generous spirit cut the pastor to his heart.

He took the 57 pennies and sold them to members of his church and raised \$250. He took 57 cents and in faith put a down payment on an additional lot to build a bigger church. It was the beginning of a much larger Sunday School wing and church, members eventually donating \$250,000 for a new wing (a princely sum in the early 1900's). They organized what they called "The Wiatt Mite Society" M.I.T.E. (named for the story of the Widow's mite in the Bible) and from that society was generated the money to build what was then one of the largest churches in the United States (its sanctuary holds 3,300 people) as well as beginning Temple College (today Temple University) and then as well they started and built Samaritan Hospital in Philadelphia. All of it came from the faith of that one child and 57 cents. To this day in one of those Sunday School rooms hangs the picture of little Hattie May Wiatt and the 57 cents she gave. It is what God can do with FAITH plus 57 cents...It is what God can do in your life...it is what God can do in the life of this church...it is what God can do for the city of Washington...and it is what God can do for our world. My beloved --Little is much in the Kingdom of God, always remember that, please.

Our scripture from 2 Corinthians is a story about how God can take small seeds and do great works through small seeds planted in faith. The Apostle Paul writes: *"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work."* (2 Corinthians 9: 8) Who was able to take 57 cents and turn it into a 3,300 seat sanctuary? *God is able.* Who was able to take little Hattie May's gift and turn it into Temple University? *God is able.* Who is able to take your FAITH in what God is able to do and change and transform our church, and our city and our nation and our world in Jesus' name? *God is able.* God is able to provide. And God is able to provide not just a sufficiency but God is able to provide, as it says, *"every blessing in abundance"*. One little girl's faith plus the power of God is able to accomplish this and to do so abundantly. Out of 57 cents God is able to provide a University and a Hospital and a Church.

So we can choose to plant whatever seed we have, great or small, believing and trusting that God is able to provide in abundance and do great works through our FAITH and God's POWER. 2 Corinthians notes the spiritual principle: *"He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will*

also reap bountifully.” (v. 6) Little Hattie May didn’t have much but what she had she sowed; she sowed bountifully and she sowed in faith. And God took what she gave and God took the faith that she had and God was able to do much with what had been given. God took 57 cents and multiplied it manifold times over. As 2 Corinthians states: “He (God) who supplies seed for the sower...will multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” (v. 10)

In the story of the Feeding of the 5,000, Jesus takes the five loaves and two fishes given by the little boy and feeds the multitude. Little is much when done in FAITH and in the POWER of the ALMIGHTY. Can we feed our city, spiritually and physically, with what we have been given? God is able; God is able.

In the Story of the Widow’s Mite, her small gift does great things because she gave all she had. God took what she gave and forevermore her faithfulness will be remembered and stories told of her because of her great faith. Can we change and transform our world through our FAITH and what we GIVE and the POWER of Almighty God? God is able; God is able.

In the Story of the Mustard Seed, Jesus notes that from the tiniest of all seeds grows the largest of all trees; from mustard seed FAITH grows ministry and mission that impacts our world for good; from faith as small as a grain of mustard PLUS the Power of God is enough to abundantly bless and provide. Can we make a difference through what we already have, who we already are, through the blessings we have already received? Can God take this and make this HUGE for His Kingdom here on earth? God is able; God is able.

An endowment is just seeds planted in faith believing that no Hattie May Wiatt in the city of Washington need die prematurely, or go to bed hungry, or not be able to read, or be unloved, or not know the Savior of the world. Seeds planted today, no matter how small or large, will do great things for God tomorrow.

Russell Herman Conwell, the Baptist pastor of the story of the 57 cent solution, was also famous for a lecture he delivered some 6,000 times, entitled “Acres of Diamonds”. The fees he collected from these lectures, by the way, he gave to the Wiatt Mite Society, and were the basis of the founding of Temple University. He told the story of the person searching the world for wealth and happiness, success and fulfillment of purpose, only to discover that the Acres or Diamonds were hiding in plain sight, right in his own backyard. One need not look elsewhere for opportunity, achievement or a better future. The resources to achieve all good things are present in one’s own community. Or as he put it –“Dig in your own back yard.” I think sometimes we think things like –“O if I only won the lottery then I could...O if only we had more people in the church then we could...O if only we had this or that or something else beyond what we already have then, then and only then could we make a difference in our world.” No beloved, everything we need we already have. We have already every gift, every skill, every person, every ability, every bit of wisdom and resourcefulness, every bit of funding to do everything and anything we could ever hope or imagine. By the power at work in the Spirit, “*God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think*” (Ephesians 3: 20) Our solution doesn’t lie out there with something we don’t already possess; our solution lies within, with everything we already have. Though rich we can convince ourselves we are poor. We have the almighty power of an Almighty God; we possess a great church filled with wonderful people. Do we have the FAITH? Do we have the FAITH of a little girl named Hattie May Wiatt, that what we already have is enough to change and transform our world in Jesus’ name? Because little is much in God’s Kingdom. It is the 57 cent solution. And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*