

A CALLING BIG ENOUGH FOR YOUR LIFE
Confirmation Sunday Matthew 26: 6-16 June 12, 2016
The Church of the Covenant

So Confirmation Class, what is a calling big enough for your life? Is success big enough? Is having a nice house or a nice car big enough? Is going to college big enough? Is playing sports big enough? What is big enough to command your entire heart, and all your thoughts, and all your mind and strength? The short answer is –only GOD is a big enough calling for your life...

Our scripture from the Gospel according to Matthew is interesting. It begins in Simon the Leper's house and Jesus is there. No good and pious Jew would ever endanger their holiness by entering into the house of someone ritualistically unclean like a leper. But Jesus is there, ministering in places where HE is not expected to be. And into this scene breaks a woman who pours an expensive alabaster jar of an expensive ointment over the head of Jesus. Tradition has it that this woman is perhaps a prostitute or a woman not viewed as being a good woman; some even suggest the woman is Mary Magdalene. But it compounds the story all the more. Jesus is in a house where HE ought not to be and he has expensive ointment poured over His head by a woman who should not even touch Him, and perhaps this woman would be deemed by her culture as also being unfit and unclean. And the disciples are outraged and indignant. And they blurt out, *"Why this waste?" (Matthew 26: 8)* Why do YOU, Jesus, allow this unclean woman in this unclean place to touch you let alone to waste this precious ointment by pouring it over your head? Why you could have taken this ointment and sold it and given the money to the poor! But what they don't understand is that this woman has anointed Jesus for the next step in His ministry –to go to the cross and to die for them. They don't understand that this anointing of Jesus with precious oil is the foreshadowing of Him being anointed with nard after He is taken down from the cross after His death. Jesus gets it; the disciples do not. The woman has anointed HIM for service. Anointed HIM for the cross. Every time someone moves from one stage to another in their discipleship and service to God they are anointed. Jesus is anointed with precious ointment by a fallen woman in order to go to the cross and to serve God according to God's plan for His life. You, as a Confirmation Class, are being anointed with the Holy Spirit in order to serve Jesus as His chosen disciples out there in the world, taking Him to places where no one might expect Him to be. Confirmation is moving from one stage to another stage in your discipleship and service to God. You are being anointed with the precious Spirit poured out from the cross in order to serve God in strength and in power with your life. You are anointed with power in order to make a difference with your life. It is the way God empowers you and calls you. It is the beginning of a calling big enough for your life...

When I was your age I was a real nerd. I was the quiet little fat boy in the third seat from the front in class, because my name started with a "B". I wasn't good looking and I wasn't athletic. I played no sports. I wasn't popular. I wasn't "cool". I didn't run with the "in crowd". I had thick coke bottle glasses. The only thing that distinguished me at all was that I liked to study. And that I loved the Lord. No one would ever single me out in a crowd or take note of me. I remember looking at my parents, who were wonderful and beautiful, smart and successful and popular and with great personalities, and I remember thinking – Wow, they must be so disappointed in me. How did I come from them? But when I was alone I would pray to God that maybe God could use me somehow. I didn't care how. Any way that You could use me, Lord, it would be OK with me.

And when I was in law school I felt called to be a Presbyterian Minister. The Lord out of His grace and mercy stooped down in love and heard the little fat boy's prayers. I felt called by God and the voice of Christ to serve Him with my life. And I still to this day don't know why. And He picked me up and sent

me to Princeton Seminary and sent me to serve wonderful churches. I remember at one point in my ministry I would pray "The Prayer of Jabez" every day – "O Lord, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory (for YOU Lord) and that Your hand would be with me..." (1 Chronicles 4: 10) I remember in my first church that some 300 kids would come each week to youth group and more than 90 would go on a summer mission trip. The Lord called me to serve some of the largest churches in our denomination. I remember as a very young seminarian coming to The Church of the Covenant where my mentor, Dr. Mac McConnell was pastor, and praying, "Someday, Lord, if it is Your will, I would like to serve a church like this one" – never knowing that the Lord would bring me precisely back to here.

I remember preaching in an almost "tent-meeting campaign" sponsored by the Presbyterian Foundation all across Florida. Its as "Baptist" as we Presbyterians ever get. And I remember criss-crossing the state and preaching to more than 6,000 people in one week. No bragging in any of this; I am just telling you what the Lord can do in your life. I remember many of my sermons being published and some are still on websites as examples of spiritual renewal and stewardship sermons. I remember the "church man", like a secret reviewer of churches, like they do for restaurants, coming to one of my churches and he was so effusive with praise, and an article appeared on the right column of the front page of the Wall Street Journal on him and his review of my church. Named in the Wall Street Journal. No boasting; I am just boasting in the Lord. I remember going on a mission trip to Kenya and they asked me to preach at a Harumbi and of course I said, "sure" and I remember more than 35,000 people showing up to share the Word of God that day. I remember looking out at the crowd and praying, "Lord, this is BIG, way bigger than I am; "Who am I that you have brought me this far?" No bragging on my part; it is what the Lord can do in your life if you let Him. And I remember just a year and a half ago, at the Franklin Graham Festival of Hope being asked to pray the closing prayer. I know, I know its not everyone's "cup of tea", but it does make a great impact for the Kingdom. But I remember standing out there by myself on a large empty stage, and the Consol Center was filled with over 6,000 people, and Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham, had just concluded his last message, and Michael W. Smith, a hugely popular Christian singer, was getting ready to set up to perform, and I was out there on this huge stage, just waiting to pray, alone and by myself, not a note, not a podium in front of me, and I remember thinking, "Wow, Lord, this is HUGE. I am just out here by myself and with You in front of all these people. I don't deserve this. Who am I that You should choose me? Lord, you have really brought the quiet little fat boy a long way..." Trust me, there is no bragging in this; it is just what the Lord can do in your life...

So, do you want to be anointed by Jesus today to serve HIM? Do you want to make a HUGE and profound difference with your life? Do you want to accept a CALLING BIG ENOUGH FOR YOUR LIFE?

Don't take a "selfie" with your cell phone of your own small life. It is so small and narcissistic, and selfish and in the end insignificant. No, take a "selflessly" picture of your own heart committed to God. Don't focus the camera of your life on yourself, who is small and insignificant in the vastness of eternity. Focus your life on the vastness, infinitude and eternity of the Almighty. Small or HUGE? Your FOCUS determines the outcome of your life. Don't wear one of these "fit bit watches" and monitor how many steps you take in a day. Order your steps and follow the Master and then your pathway will make a profound difference for the world. Don't monitor the number of heartbeats you make in a day, monitor the great heartbeat of the Lord Jesus Christ and your faith and compassion can reshape the world. Focus SMALL or focus BIG, it is your choice today. But I would urge you to be anointed by Jesus to serve today. And to accept a CALLING BIG ENOUGH FOR YOUR LIFE. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania
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