

## FROM THE PASTOR

Community Lutheran Church, July, 2013

Sometimes big things are just small things accumulated.

Take a walk in the woods and look at a big tree. What is it doing? Seems like nothing. Yet something momentous is happening. The tree is turning sunlight and soil into wood, one cell at a time. That is how it got to be a big tree. You cannot, on any given day, watch a tree grow; but there it stands, proving the power of small things accumulated.

Constructive change is almost never sudden. Try thinking about changes that happen quickly. When I did it, I thought of tornadoes, earthquakes and dynamite – all essentially destructive forces. If there is a “sudden change” that we think is good – a birth, a graduation, a wedding, a job promotion – it is seldom a big change in itself. Rather, it marks the end of one gradual process, and the beginning of another.

On the other hand, God sometimes does bring about quick, constructive change. We’ve all heard stories of lives that were suddenly transformed by an encounter with Jesus. God can and does work rapid improvement in believers, or even whole churches. Praise the Lord for this! Note that these things are miraculous, like healing the blind or turning water into wine. With greater openness to God’s Spirit we might see more such wonders.

That said, often the big things are just small things accumulated. God wants to see growth in our lives, and growth by nature happens bit by bit. Some of God’s favorite means for working among us are plain-looking things like regular worship, habitual prayer, or daily time in God’s Word.

In my own life, one significant factor for growth has been the habit of reading from the Bible every night before going to bed. I don’t take a lot of credit for this; it was just something God established in my heart over thirty-five years ago. The average time spent has been small, often just between ten and fifteen minutes per night. But even at ten minutes, that adds up to over 22,500 hours so far – which is over 900 days, over two-and-a-half *years*.

When I first started, the result of this was mostly that I became familiar with the overall flow of the Bible’s story. Then as the Holy Spirit got a greater hold on me, the reading became a major shaping force. But interestingly, these short devotional times have almost never been dramatic, inspirational events. Instead, subtle things happen – such as a word of comfort or correction or even curiosity (as in, “I wonder why Job responded to David in that way?”). The really great thing has been the power of small things accumulated.

At this point I could imagine some reader being discouraged. You may be thinking you are now old and it is too late for the cumulative power of small things. I would encourage you to look at it differently. It is never too late to make changes, and even a small change could make a big difference.

Because sometimes big things are just small things accumulated.