

13A SFX 2023
A cup of cold water

A cup of cold water. Our Lord says: "If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones he will most certainly not lose his reward."

Sometimes we think God is to be found in the grand gestures, the great events of history, in its powerful moments. But then we remember that God became small, was born as a little child, came down into our ordinary world in Nazareth, a backwater of Galilee. And as a man he taught us about the ordinary things, the little things that make up our daily lives. He taught us to find 'heaven in ordinary' to use George Herbert's phrase. He spoke of bread and wine and life and love, of mustard seeds, of lost coins and lilies in the field. God's Kingdom revealed in small things, the crumbs of existence, the seemingly insignificant conveying profound truths.

He directs our attention to the act of offering a cup of cold water to one of the life's little ones. This seemingly small gesture carries a deep significance, for it represents the importance of reaching out to others with love, compassion, and selflessness.

Sometimes, we may feel that our efforts to make a difference in the world are insignificant and count for nothing. We may question whether our acts of kindness or generosity truly matter in the grand scheme of things. Yet, these acts of love can have the power to transform lives because these are the seeds of the Kingdom. Jesus assures us that even the smallest acts hold great weight in the eyes of God. It is not the grandeur or splendour of the action that matters, but rather the pure intention and selflessness behind it. Like the widow's mite. What are the small things we can do to make a difference?

When we extend a cup of cold water to another, we acknowledge their thirst, their need for refreshment, and their longing for human connection. We offer them a moment of respite and care. A lift of the heart. Just as a cup of water can quench physical thirst, small acts of love have the power to satisfy emotional and spiritual thirst. They can bring comfort, solace, and healing.

The beauty of these small acts lies in their accessibility. Each one of us can offer a cup of cold water to those in need. We may not be able to solve all the world's problems, but we can make a difference to individual lives through simple acts and small things.

St Teresa of Avila found God moving amongst the pots and pans. For St Benedict, the humblest things we have around the home are a way to God. The kitchen crockery can be like the sacred vessels of the altar. The Carmelite Brother Lawrence happily found God in the Kitchen. "We can do little things for God" he said. "I turn the cake that is frying on the pan for love of him, and that done, if there is nothing else to call me, I prostrate myself in worship before him, who has given me grace to

work; afterwards I rise happier than a king.”

The kindness we show to others we show to God. Like welcoming a prophet, as Jesus says in the Gospel, and the Shunammite woman does in the first reading. She builds a room so that Elisha can rest on his travels. A bed, a table, a chair a lamp. She wanted to make him welcome. She a foreigner recognises him as a “holy man of God” – she affirms him, esteems him, shows him honour. Elisha asked the woman if the King or the Commander of the Army could do something great for her in return. But “No” she said. “I live with my own people.” I live in the ordinary. What she wanted was something small, a son, to hold in her arms, to love. She receives a great reward for welcoming a prophet – the reward is the best she would want, a family.

My dear brothers and sisters, it is through the small gestures in life that we build the Kingdom. When we learn to find the presence of God in small things our perspective shifts. We begin to see the beauty and sacredness in the mundane, a heightened consciousness of God’s presence. Heaven in ordinary. God in the bits and pieces.

Henri Nouwen once wrote: “A friend once gave me a beautiful photograph of a water lily. I asked him how he had been able to take such a splendid picture. With a smile he said, ‘Well, I had to be very patient and very attentive. It was only after a few hours of compliments that the lily was willing to let me take her picture.’”

The artist Georgia O’Keeffe wrote: “Nobody sees a flower; it is so small. We haven’t time – and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.”

Just as the beauty of a flower can capture our attention, the small moments of love, kindness, and compassion can reveal something of the Kingdom. ‘A cup of cold water.’ Every moment, every encounter, every interaction has the potential to draw us closer to God.

So we embrace the ordinary with gratitude, and through the smallest acts of love pray that we can create a ripple effect of goodness in our world. What might be the small channels of grace in my life today?