Perspective is everything. There’s an old joke that I have heard told about several power couples and regardless of who you may have heard it told on, I think it’s relevant to today’s scripture lesson.

It’s the joke about the man and his spouse who were driving along an interstate highway when he noticed that their car was low on gas. They got off the highway at the next exit and soon found a rundown gas station with just one gas pump. The man asked the lone attendant to fill the tank and check the oil, then went for a little walk around the station to stretch his legs.

As he was returning to the car, he noticed that the attendant and his wife were engaged in an animated conversation. The conversation stopped as he paid the attendant. But as he was getting back into the car, he saw the attendant wave and heard him say, "It was great talking to you."

As they drove out of the station, the man asked his spouse if she knew the man. She readily admitted she did. They had gone to high school together and had dated steadily for about a year.

"Boy, were you lucky that I came along," bragged the husband. "If you had married him, you'd be the wife of a gas station attendant instead of the wife of a chief executive officer."

The wife smiled and replied: "My dear, if I had married him, he'd be the chief executive officer and you'd be the gas station attendant."
Perspective is everything. And in today’s scripture reading, I believe that Jesus is attempting to change our perspective. We began looking at the 13th chapter of Matthew two weeks ago when we looked at the “Parable of the Sower” or as I attempted to re-frame it as “The Parable of the Soil.” A parable all about tiny seeds that were thrown among seeds.

This week, we pick back up with lessons about faith being like a mustard seed, like a hidden treasure, a fine pearl and a fish being caught. All relatively small things in the grand picture of life, I think Jesus is trying to show us it’s the little things that matter.

A small seed. A mustard seed to be precise. Why did Jesus choose such a small item to represent something so large as heaven? Do you hear the irony in Jesus words? The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. If you have ever seen a mustard seed then you know what a ridiculous statement this is. They are as small as a grain of sand. You can literally hold thousands of them comfortably in the palm of your hand. Yet it grows into a very large bush. Large enough for birds to build their nest among its branches. What is Jesus saying? He is saying, "God is at work, even though our human eyes often fail to perceive what is happening."

It's the little things. Tiny viruses the size of a pin head, heart valves no larger than a thumbnail, single votes in an election, an ill-chosen word from a loved one - little things have tremendous power.

And equally important - sometimes it takes just a little bit of patience to work with people. Sometimes it takes just a little bit of love to redeem a situation. Sometimes it takes just a little bit of grace to bring about healing. Sometimes it takes just a little bit of understanding to save a marriage.
Then we are told that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a hidden treasure. I think it is of particular importance that we acknowledge that we do not know what this treasure is. Trust me, since moving to Naples, I have discovered what shopping in thrift stores like our own Bargain Box can mean. Someone else’s junk can easily become my treasure. We can most likely assume that this treasure was discovered by a day laborer working the field. We don’t know if that treasure was a gold coin, a stash of quality seeds left behind, or something buried in the ground that perhaps the field worker didn’t even know what he had discovered. I believe the lesson for us that we don’t always recognize with our own eyes the very treasure that is before us.

From there the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a pearl of great price. Not a strand of pearls but simply one pearl found by someone who was in search of such a great pearl. It reminds me of how so many of you refer to your spouses. I cannot begin to tell you how many times I have entered a home as someone was dying or had just died and I listen to their loved one describe how they had married “the one.” Maybe they don’t refer to them as a “pearl of great price” but I know deep in my heart as a pastor what kind of love has been shared between the years, be they numerous or few.

Finally, the Kingdom of Heaven is referred to as a net thrown into the sea where fish of every kind is caught. The disciples, many of whom were fisherman, would have perhaps understood this image best, when Jesus told them that fish were brought onto shore. Who is to say that this wasn’t done in a time where fish were at a premium and people were hungry? We are reminded in another story about the power of what Jesus can do with one fish and twelve loaves. He can feed thousands. And perhaps Jesus is reminding us once again of our call to feed the hungry.
So, mustard seeds, a treasure in a field, a pearl of great price and fish. What could Jesus possibly be wanting us in 2014 in Naples, Florida to understand about the Christian experience today? Well, I think Jesus wants to remind us that it’s the “little things that matter.”

And perhaps there is no greater lesson or reminder needed for us during this time of great strife at our borders. From October through the end of May, 46,932 unaccompanied children, nearly all from Mexico and Central America, were taken into custody, according to data obtained from U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Recently released figures show that by the end of June, that number had risen to 57,525. The new data show a 117% increase in the number of unaccompanied children ages 12 and younger caught at the U.S.-Mexico border this fiscal year compared with last fiscal year. Please hear me clearly, immigration issues are complex and I do not have a simple answer to these or any other immigration-related challenges facing our country. But what I do know is that as humans, we get so caught up in our own worlds, our own problems, our own fears and our own turmoil that it is so easy to forget the least, the last, the lost, the lonely and the vulnerable in our world that need our attention. It is the “little ones” that we need to be praying for and working for. Because Jesus told us time and time again about what the Kingdom of Heaven could look like, and I am hear this morning to urge you as Christians to help the Kingdom of Heaven go from being words on a page to an experience in our lives. A place where faith the size of a mustard seed can save children, soften hearts and solve challenges that seem so daunting. Maybe, just maybe, the Kingdom of Heaven can look like Naples, Florida.