

BIBLE READINGS: 1 John 4:7-12 John 4:4-38

SERMON

I believe that deep down inside each of us wants to be significant, wants to make difference.

There's a latent desire in every human being to do something of worth that will have lasting significance. There's a longing in most people to do something that will make life better for others.

According to Robert Louis Stevenson "So long as we love we serve; so long as we are loved by others, I would almost say that we are indispensable; and no man is useless while he has a friend."

Some years ago, a study was taken of fifty people over the age of 95 were asked to respond to one question: "If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently..." Three answers constantly emerged and dominated the results of the study.

1. I would reflect more
2. I would risk more
3. I would do more things that would live on after I am dead.

Why were those answers so dominant? Because those who were surveyed wanted to believe that it mattered that they had lived. That they had made a difference.

To one degree or another, we all want to believe that it matters that we have lived and that we have made a difference.

God says we can. In Ephesians we read "God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do." (Eph. 2:10)

This tells us two things

1. We have distinctive tasks designed especially for us.
 2. God wants us to do something special. We can make a difference.
- We were called by God to make a difference.

2 Corinthians 9:8 tells us "...God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause."

A theologian once observed: "I've never met a Christian who planned to have a mediocre life. But I've met plenty of mediocre Christians." In other words, there are a lot of Christians doing nothing more than just existing. This is an uncomfortable thought.

Why would that be?

One reason may be that mediocre Christians don't consider their role to be very important.

Their idea of being a good Christian may be to come and sit in church. Maybe they have never realized God desired to use them.

Or, maybe they don't want to be used.

Maybe they've done some things for the church and they want to retire. They feel they've done their part.

It makes you wonder if we really understood what Jesus had done for us. It's as if there are those who say: "Yes Jesus I know you died for me... but I've paid my debt back to you; and I have this thing I need to do that's so much more important than anything You may want me

to do!"

On an even more basic level they are declaring to the King of all the Universe – I know you want me to do something special, I know you've given me the privilege of working with You to change the world... but I have something more important on my plate.

God puts this challenge in front of us... "Do you want to spend the rest of your life on things that may not matter 5 years from now... may not make a difference in eternity... or do you want a chance to change the world.

The Apostle Paul once told some friends "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me

When I was a new minister – I would visit the Masonic nursing home at Glenfield. I would visit the aged and infirm. There was one younger woman there – maybe in her 50's. I can't remember her name, I am sorry to say. She had crippling arthritis. She spent her days floating on a chair filled with water.. Her hands were twisted balls of boney fingers. She could not even feed herself. I remember thinking – how sad – a life wasted, opportunities unexplored. I would sit and talk with her and pray with her. She always had a smile and she had many volunteers to help her. I found that when I would visit – I tended to stay longer with her. It took me some time to realise that she was ministering to me! Not the other way around! I discovered she had a powerful prayer ministry – praying for people not only at the Glenfield Masonic Homes – but throughout the world.

She would write – or have someone write – to various public figures. Nelson Mandella, Ronald Reagan, Mother Theresa to name a few. She would tell them – that they were in her prayers and was there anything she could be praying for them. She was in regular contact with many of the most powerful and spiritual people in the world – and she prayed. With self effacing humility, she would say – I haven't got anything else to do!

Another reason Christians might live mediocre lives is: they don't know what God wants them to do.

For some reason they believe that every task they do for God has to be eye-catchingly dramatic. something earthshaking, something they can sink their teeth into.

In the process of seeking these spectacular ministries they overlook the opportunities of the "small things."

We find in John 4:27 that "At that moment Jesus' disciples returned, and they were greatly surprised to find him talking with a woman. But none of them said to her, "What do you want?" or asked him, "Why are you talking with her?" ""

Why were the disciples surprised that Jesus was talking with the Samaritan woman? Because she was a woman and a half breed Samaritan. She was insignificant. AND Jesus' contact with her was over a matter of asking for water. It was a small thing, an insignificant opportunity. but because Jesus acted on a small opportunity with an insignificant woman of a despised people - because of that simple interaction with this simple woman people came to Jesus and experienced change in their lives.

Zechariah challenges us by asking "Who dares despise the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10). In other words, don't despise the small things in life - those are the times when God does God's greatest works.

We live in a small world. In fact we live in a small section of a small world. And in fact we barely live in our small bodies in this small world. Within our small bodies we have limited command of our senses and of our thoughts and feelings. Our knowledge of the world is infinitesimal – our knowledge of God the same!

Yet this is our day!

This is our chance to grow our knowledge of God and of God's creation. This is our day to take up whatever opportunities arise to do good things for Christ. Little things, big things – to show love and be a friend – to help others and help bear their burden. Little things – things we know we can do.

Don't despise the day of small things.

Jesus said: "anyone who gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Why would Jesus say that?

Because people have a tendency to look at the small things as unimportant. But in God's eyes, there are no small things. Anything done in God's name is important to God.

C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien were close friends. [Inklings] They both wanted to offer people a way to understand the Gospel story. Lewis wrote the Narnia series. Tolkien wrote "The Lord of the Rings"

If you ever read this series of books you will find many gospel themes addressed in many ways.

One of the great gospel characters in the series is Gandalf.

This is how Tolkien had Gandalf express it...

Some believe it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. It is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay... Small acts of kindness and love.

As it tells us in Hebrews 6:10 "God is not unfair. He will not forget the work you did or the love you showed for him in the help you gave and are still giving to his people"

This is our day – fill it with acts of love and service for God's people. Amen.

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