

A Life Worth Living

John 4:34-36 HCSB "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work," Jesus told them. (35) "Don't you say, 'There are still four more months, then comes the harvest'? Listen to *what* I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest. (36) The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life, so the sower and reaper can rejoice together.

Jesus made this statement to his disciples after His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. I want you to notice how important doing the will of God was for Jesus. He said that doing the will of God was as important as eating was. Notice too what doing the will of God entailed: He was seizing every opportunity to serve others. He had come to this well tired, hungry, and thirsty and within minutes had even turned his own needs into an opportunity to serve others' needs!

Open your eyes! Look around you. You are surrounded by opportunities that are ready for harvest. The problem is not that we lack the tools. The Master of the Harvest has ensured that both the sower and the reaper have the tools and resources they need. The problem is a lack of motivation to put our skills, talents, and opportunities to work for the Master.

A psychiatrist was speaking to his patient one day. "We rarely use the word 'cure,'" he said, "but after 5 years of therapy it is my pleasure to pronounce you completely cured." To his surprise an unhappy look came over the woman's face. "What's wrong?" he asked. "I thought you'd be thrilled." "Oh, its fine for you," she said, "but 3 years ago I was Joan of Arc. Now I'm nobody."

We find her statement humorous but what that person was saying was: "I'm not important, I'm not significant – it doesn't matter who I am... because I have no value." Like the woman at the well, they see their lives as of no importance whatsoever.

Several years ago, a study was taken of fifty people over the age of 95 who 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.

Those who were surveyed wanted to believe that it mattered that they had lived; that they had made a difference.

Deep down inside, each of us wants to be significant, wants to make difference. We want to do something of worth that will have lasting significance. Every man feels the need to render himself indispensable. I'm telling you that the only way you're going to do that is to make life better for others.

Ephesians 2:10 declares:

- **Ephesians 2:10 HCSB** For we are His creation--created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.

This tells me two things:

1. You and I have a distinctive task designed for especially for us.
2. God wants you and me to do something special. We can make a difference.

2 Corinthians 9:8 tells us:

- **2 Corinthians 9:8 HCSB** And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.

In spite of what God has told us, in spite of Yahweh's provision of planned opportunities, spiritual gifts, and physical talents, of making every grace overflow to us so that we can excel in every good work, that kind of life remains the exception doesn't it?

Howard Hendricks 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.

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 simply come and sit in church. Maybe they have never realized God desired to use them. Or, maybe they don't want to be used. OR, maybe they've already done some things for the church and they want to retire. They feel they've done their part. These are the people who refuse to work in the nursery or in some church ministry because they've "put in their time so let somebody else do it for a while."

You know what I'm talking about. You've all heard or seen those people. Unfortunately, some of you may BE this type of Christian. These weak Christians are the kind of believes that there is a point where one "retires" from serving God. They feel there comes a time when you can choose to not to be used by God. That type person makes you wonder if they really understand what Jesus has done for them.

It's as if they're saying: "Yes Jesus, I know you died for me... but I've paid my debt. We're square now!"

Or maybe they're thinking, "I have this thing I need to do that's so much more important than anything God may want me to do!"

On an even more basic level, they are declaring to Yahweh Melek ha Olam, Yahweh King of the entire 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."

Steve Jobs (founder of Apple Computer) once gave John Sculley this challenge when he was trying to woo Sculley away from being President of Pepsi-Cola. Jobs asked him: "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?"

God has placed the same kind of challenge in front of each 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:

- [Philippians 3:13-14 HCSB](#) Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, (14) I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.
- [Philippians 1:20-21 HCSB](#) My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death. (21) For me, living is Christ and dying is gain.

A few verses later he encouraged, "Just one thing: live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."¹

Another reason Christians might live mediocre lives is that, for some reason, they believe every task they do for God has to be eye-catching and dramatic, something earthshaking, something they can "sink their teeth into". Unfortunately, in the process of seeking these spectacular ministries, they overlook the opportunities of the "small things."

Turn back to:

- [John 4:27 HCSB](#) Just then His disciples arrived, and they were amazed that He was talking with a woman. Yet no one said, "What do You want?" or "Why are You talking with her?"

They were surprised because she was a woman and a half breed Samaritan to boot. She was insignificant and Jesus' contact with her was over a matter of asking for water. It was a small

¹ Philippians 1:27

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 a change their lives.

Zechariah chides us by asking, "who scorns the day of small things?"² In other words, don't despise the small things in life - those are the times when God does His greatest works.

Let me tell you a story:

In the spring of 1883, two medical students had just graduated from the University of Michigan. Ben, the short and stocky graduate attempted to entice Will, his tall thin friend, to go with him to New York: "We'll make a great team. There are a lot of wealthy people back East - we'll be rich in no time. What do you say?" "You're probably right Ben," Will responded.

"Well, then, come East with me. We'll travel in Europe and hobnob with all the greats of the world. We'll meet beautiful, rich, young women. With our talent we can't miss."

Will was silent for a moment then said, "it's tempting Ben, but it's just not what I want. I want first of all to be a great surgeon - the very best if I have the ability..."

"And you will be," the other interrupted. "What's wrong with getting rich in the process?"

"Nothing, I suppose. But what about these people here? They need good doctors too - even if they can't always pay. No, I think I should go back to my home state and give them all the help I can."

Weeks later they parted: Ben to New York with his dream of getting rich treating the wealthy and powerful of the city. Will headed for Minnesota where he'd be a horse and buggy surgeon, helping his father, a general practitioner, the two of them ministered to the sick in the small towns and farms in and around their home town. In the years that followed nothing much was heard of Ben. As for Will, he & his younger brother Charles developed the Mayo Clinic.

Eventually, Will Mayo did treat the wealthy and powerful from the East - but he did not go to them in New York... they came to Rochester.

Conclusion:

Do not despise the day of small things. Do not despise the gifts that God has given to you. Jesus said,

- [Matthew 10:42 HCSB](#) And whoever gives just a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple--I assure you: He will never lose his reward!"

Jesus said that because people have tendency to look the small things as unimportant. Listen carefully to me. I don't know what your gifts are but in God's eyes, there are no small things. Anything done in God's name is important to God.

- [Hebrews 6:10 HCSB](#) For God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you showed for His name when you served the saints--and you continue to serve them.

² Zechariah 4:10