



Have you ever felt dissatisfied with yourself? Have you ever felt like you weren't smart enough; that you didn't possess any distinctive gifts or talents? Ever gone down the road of thinking of yourself as unexceptional; just an ordinary – nothing special kind of person? If that describes you, I want to tell you as clearly and directly as I can today that there is nothing ordinary about you. In fact, there is nothing ordinary about any child of God.

I fear that there are times when we fall into that trap and measure ourselves against others. All of a sudden life becomes about what we can't do. We begin to see ourselves as "less than" or "not as great as." Ever been there?

This past week I reached out to thank someone for an encouraging email that they had sent to me. Much to my surprise I found that person in a position where they were putting their efforts down. Over and over they told me that they weren't doing enough; contributing enough. They wished that they were somehow smarter, richer, higher up; in a position where they could bring about more impact and change in our world. They compared themselves to those who are on the front line during this pandemic. They rattled name after name off to me, measuring themselves and their skills against those who are trained in different ways and leading very different lives.

As I continued to listen, I immediately thought about John the Baptist. Yes, John the Baptist – the one who lived out in the wilderness – the one probably no one wanted to be as they took note of his diet and crazy wild attire. John never performed a miracle, but Jesus said of him, "Among those born of women there is no one greater" (Luke 7:28). His mission was to be a "witness to the light (John 1:8). John was content to be only a voice, if it caused people to think about Christ.

For me, this person I reached out to is that same kind of light. I have witnessed them time and time again, being there for others when it comes to inspiration and encouragement. They continually remind people that Christ is with them as they work to uplift and remind others of the love that surrounds them. They help others to think about Christ.

I wonder what it is that we are doing right here and right now in the midst of our gifts and abilities to help others think about Christ? Not in an effort to compare or to measure, but simply to step back and ask how are we shining the light of Christ – how are we helping others to see it in their lives?

A story for thought: "All the kids called him Grandpa." He was a plumber with an eighth-grade education. But no one was more articulate about Jesus than Grandpa Craig.

Kids from all over spent a lot of time with Grandpa – eating popcorn in his living room, having Bible studies, praying, just shooting the breeze. No matter where the conversation wandered though, Grandpa would always bring it around to Jesus.

Whenever the conversation would be about school or dating or the future, Grandpa would say, "That reminds me of something Jesus said . . ." or, "That's just like when Jesus . . ." and he would reveal new insights about His Lord.

Grandpa's life was filled with the reality of Jesus' presence. On Saturday afternoons, neighborhood kids would always take long walks with Grandpa. He would point to the countryside and say, "Now that's Jesus' way of showing us how much he loves us. He made all these things for us to enjoy."

Grandpa saw Jesus in everything around him. "See how the sun goes down so faithfully every evening?" he would ask. "That shows how faithful Jesus is to us. Just like the sun, he never lets us down."

Whenever anyone wondered how to act toward a new kid in school, Grandpa would ask, "How would Jesus act if he were in school?" Problems with a parent? "What would Jesus do in your shoes?" His advice was always simple: "Focus on Jesus. Figure it out from there."

My friends, we are doing more good than we know. The things we do today – sowing seeds or sharing simple truths of Christ – people will someday refer to as the first things that prompted them to think of Him.

I thought about that this past week as I spoke with members of our 8th grade class. This is the time of the year when they complete their 8th grade confirmation essays. One of the questions this year asked for them to share where their faith was – the strengths as well as the weaknesses. Many of them talked about members of our church family who have helped them along the way. They mentioned Sunday school teachers, pastors, people who simply sit with them in the pews. People all around them who teach them about Christ.

One student stated, "When I was old enough to take my first faith steps it was members of the congregation that were there to help me as I started to learn how to walk with Jesus." Another student talked about the mentoring relationship and how important that was for them. How surprised they were that a total stranger could have that much impact in their life. How they could talk with that person about the death of their loved one and how that helped. Another asked when they could be a mentor just like they had because they wanted to make that kind of difference for someone.

So today I want to encourage you to keep doing what it is that you do. Celebrate the gifts that God has given you – the distinct individual gifts that your life has been blessed in and through. Don't make light of what you have – see it for what it is and put it to good use – for we never know who is learning and growing from what it is that we do.

*"Others may do a greater work.
But you have your part to do;
and no one in all God's family
can do it as well as you."*

Prayer:

Gracious Father help me to bloom where I am planted and resist the temptation to compare myself to others. Help me to see the ways you have uniquely gifted me to serve you and your Kingdom. Thank you for making me just as I am. Forgive me for the ways I have compared myself and coveted the abilities of others. I pray that, starting today, I would see the opportunities in front of me to use my gifts and abilities. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.