

ESF, Lord's day service message
5/22/2016

The God of the Lowly
1 Corinthians 1:26-31

²⁶ Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

There is a way for every ordinary person to do extra ordinary things and live an extra ordinary life. It is to be used by God. When an ordinary person is used by God, the person can do extra ordinary things and live an extra ordinary life.

According to the word in verse 26, Corinthian believers were poor, lowly, and insignificant people.

In those days, the city of Corinth was a center of world-wide commerce. It was a crossroad for travelers and traders. So many people in the city could make lots of money and became rich.

Also, the city was not far from the city of Athens which was the center of education and philosophy in those days. So, many highly educated people and influential intellects were living in the city.

But God did not choose many out of those rich, famous or influential people. Instead, God chose many out of the poor, the uneducated, the ordinary and the lowly.

Why?

The reason why God chooses ordinary and lowly people and uses them to do great things is because;

First, God wants to encourage all the discouraged because of their poor and lowly status.

If God chooses only the rich, the influential and the famous to do great things, the poor and the lowly would have no hope even in God's calling.

But, God wants to give hope to those who think that they are nobodies, who think that they can't make any difference no matter what they do. God wants to give them a hope that in His grace they still can be precious people, useful people, capable people to do something great.

In the world where people judge a person's value according to human standards, the poor and the lowly are usually ignored and despised. They are not selected to do any significant or important jobs. So they have to keep living without hope of making any difference.

But God chooses not only the rich and famous but also the poor and the lowly. All men can have hope in God's calling. God includes every one regardless of their human condition, both the rich and the poor, both the famous and infamous, both the educated intellect and the uneducated ignorant, both the saints and the sinners.

The Bible is full of the stories of the ordinary, lowly people whom God used to do great things. He chose old Abraham who was childless to be the source from whom an entire nation would spring. He used a poor shepherd Moses to work mighty miracles. D. L. Moody once said that Moses spent 40 years thinking he was somebody, 40 years learning he was nobody, and 40 years discovering what God can do with a nobody. This nobody was used by God to lead the Hebrew people from Egypt on

their way to the Promised Land. He made a shepherd boy David into Israel's greatest King.

In the New Testament, the Lord used twelve uneducated men to turn the world upside down. God delights in doing great things through those who are lowly and insignificant. It was an ordinary boy who gave the Lord five ordinary loaves of bread and two ordinary fish to feed the five thousand men. With this ordinary food, Jesus met the needs of the people gathered to hear Him teach. The wood used to fashion the cross on which Christ died was a common Roman cross, but after it was used by God, it became known as the cross of Christ.

Through the example of Corinthian believers, and many other believers in the Bible and believers in history, God wants to teach us the truth. It is that He can use anybody in any condition to glorify Himself. It is that by His grace and power, He can use even the poorest of the poor, the lowliest of the lowly.

Some of you may think that this could happen only in ancient times or that it could happen to only a few selected ordinary people. But God has been doing the same thing to every ordinary person who believes in His graceful calling all the time.

Gladys Aylward was a missionary to China from 1932 until 1970. (A film was made about her story, called “The Inn of the 6th Happiness”).

In 1938, she was forced to flee when the Japanese invaded Yangcheng, but she would not abandon the orphans that she had been caring for. With just one assistant, Gladys Aylward led more than 100 children over the treacherous mountains toward Free China. Along the harrowing journey she grappled with despair and, at times, a feeling of utter hopelessness.

One morning on that journey, after Gladys Aylward had had a sleepless night, a 13 year old girl reminded her of Moses and how he had led the

Israelites out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. To which Gladys replied: "But I am not Moses". Then the little girl said, "Of course you aren't, but Jehovah is still God!" Gladys Aylward was encouraged by the word and she was able to make it through the mountains to safety. The story proved once again that no matter how inadequate we may feel, God is still God, and we can depend on Him. God still uses the ordinary when they trusted in His grace.

If you think and feel that you have nothing to be proud of, you are too poor, too sinful, too ignorant to make any difference, God wants you to know the truth today. God encourages you to believe that in His graceful calling, regardless of your human condition, He uses you for noble and great things. God encourages you today to believe that in His graceful calling, you also can live with a great dream, and make the dream come true. Believe in God's graceful calling for you. Believe that God wants to use you too. Have a great dream in the calling of God.

Second, God wants to nullify the pride of men who boast of their own power, wisdom and ability, so that no man can boast before Him and all men shall give glory to Him.

What God hates most is the pride of man. Proverbs 16:5 says, *The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.* Pride is the character of the Devil who wanted to become like God and became rebellious against God (Isaiah 14:12-20). The Devil uses pride to provoke man to be rebellious against God (Genesis 3:4-5). Proverbs 16:18 says, "*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*"

When God loves us and wants to use us, the first thing He will deal with is our pride. When we look around and find out that God uses those who we think are poor and lowly for great things, we may hear God's voice saying we also can be used by him when we humble ourselves before Him.

When we see some of the rich and famous people by human standards whose lives are shattered in a moment by losing everything they have, God speaks to us that we should never boast about what we have or who we are. God speaks to us that we should never put our trust in man's wealth and power but always humbly trust in Him.

To be used by God, we must humble ourselves before Him even if we have something, or we are somebody in this world, and always depend on His power, and give all the glory to Him for whatever we accomplish in our lives.

Great spiritual power comes through being aware of our weakness and our need for God's strength. Only when we completely depend on God, can God use us powerfully.

You cannot be too small for God to use, but you can be too big. God is not looking for great people to achieve great things. He is looking for those who are small, lowly but humbly depend on Him and completely give glory to Him.

Henry Blackaby says, "If you feel weak, limited, or ordinary, then you are the best material through which God can work."

The story is told of a college professor who visited the Fiji Islands. Being agnostic, he critically remarked to an elderly chief, "You're a great leader, but it's a pity you've been taken in by those foreign missionaries. They only want to get rich through you. No one believes the Bible anymore. People are tired of the threadbare story of Christ dying on a cross for the sins of mankind. They know better now. I'm sorry you've been so foolish as to accept their story."

The old chief's eyes flashed as he answered, "See that great rock over there? On it we smashed the heads of our victims. Notice the furnace next to it? In that oven we formerly roasted the bodies of our enemies. If it hadn't been for those good missionaries and the love of Jesus that

changed us from cannibals into Christians, you'd never leave this place alive! You'd better thank the Lord for the Gospel; otherwise we'd already be feasting on you. If it weren't for the Bible, you'd now be our supper!"

Dr. Henry "Fritz" Schaefer earned his Ph.D in chemical physics from Stanford University. For 18 years, he served as professor of chemistry at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of more than 800 scientific publications and during the period of 1981-1997, he was the sixth-most highly cited chemist in the world.

In a recent lecture, after listing some of his leading discoveries, Dr. Schaefer said this: "However, the most important discovery of my life was my discovery of Jesus Christ. In 1973, I discovered the Jesus Christ of history, the Jesus whose life is described on the pages of the New Testament."

Never boast before God. 1 Peter 5:6 says, "*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*" Humble yourself before Him. Look for God's glory. Then God will surely use you to manifest His blessings and to accomplish great things.