

ESF, Lord's day service message
8/6/2023

The God of The Lowly

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Brothers and sisters, 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 God 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 the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

A husband said to his wife one day, "I've noticed that you always carry my photo in your handbag to the office. Why?"

His wife said, "When there is a problem, no matter how impossible, I look at your picture and the problem disappears."

The husband puffed himself up and said, "You see how miraculous and powerful I am for you?"

And his wife answered, "Yes, I see your picture and say to myself, "What other problem can there be greater than dealing with this man?""

When we judge people what they do and who they are outwardly, we often misunderstand or misjudge why they are doing what they do and who they are.

According to the word in verse 26, most of the Corinthian believers were poor, lowly, and insignificant people. So, if they had been judged by their appearing status, they were nobodies.

In those days, the city of Corinth was a center of worldwide commerce. It was a crossroad for travelers and traders. So many people in the city could make lots of money and become 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 intellectuals were living in the city.

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

Why?

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

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 are nobodies, who think that they can't make any difference no matter what they do. God wants to give them a hope. It is 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, usually only the rich, the educated, the smart, the strong, and those who have good outward appearance can be chosen. The poor, the uneducated, the weak, and the lowly are usually ignored and despised. They are not selected to do any significant or important jobs. So, they must keep living without the hope of making any difference.

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

The Bible is full of the stories of the poor, 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 turned to somebody who was used by God to lead the Hebrew people from Egypt to the Promised Land. God made a shepherd boy David into Israel's greatest King and through his family branch would come the Messiah.

In the New Testament, the Lord used twelve people, most of who were uneducated, poor, and sinful, to turn the world upside down. The Lord used an ordinary boy who gave the Lord just five loaves of bread and two fish to feed the five thousand men. God delights in doing great things through those who are lowly and insignificant.

The Romans used wooden crosses to execute the worst criminals. They crucified Jesus on one of the crosses not because they found any crime of Jesus, but because they tried to please the crowd for their political gain. *The cross on which Jesus was crucified was an ordinary cross. But God used it to redeem all men from their sins, and it became known as the cross of the Savior.*

Through the example of Corinthian believers, and many other believers in the Bible and believers in history, God wants to teach us a truth. It is that God 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 happened only in ancient times or that it happens only to a few selected 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. She was neither famous nor doing anything great. She was taking care of orphans.

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 bring those 100 children to safety.

This 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 a difference, God wants you to

know this truth today: God turns nobodies into somebodies who accomplish great things. 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 a 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).

When God loves us and wants to use us, the first thing He will deal with is our pride. He will make us humble.

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, power and wisdom but always humbly trust in Him. When we see that God uses those who we think are poor and lowly for great things, we hear God's word of encouragement. God confirms that He can use us also when we humble ourselves before Him.

During the past several years of the Coronavirus pandemic, people tried to figure out what God's will was in the pandemic, or what God was

trying to say to this world by the pandemic. There may be many different understandings and opinions. But we may agree that God teaches men to realize the limitations and fragility of their wisdom and power. God taught all men on earth to be humble.

To be used by God, we must humble ourselves before Him even if we have something to boast about, or people recognize us as somebody in this world. And we should always depend on God's power and wisdom and give all the glory to Him for whatever we have or accomplish.

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 you, but you can be too big. God is not looking for people who think they are somebodies 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 proud 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 are fools. They only want to gain something through you. No one believes in the Bible anymore. People are tired of the 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 humble 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!"

If you think you cannot accomplish anything significant because you are nobody, hear God's call today. If you are a Christian, God has called you already to turn an insignificant life of nobody to an important life of somebody. Don't try to find the life of somebody in big things. Find what God does in small things people have.

Remember again how God turned the lives of ordinary nobodies like old Abraham, poor Moses, the shepherd boy David, uneducated disciples, to the great lives that have changed history. Don't spend your time trying to be somebody. Remember again; God did not make their lives great in a few years. God took many years of trials to make them humble. Take difficult times and trials, even if they seem to last a long time, as God's way to make you humble.

If you are not a Christian, accept God's call now. God has sent His son Jesus to call on you. Humble yourself before God. You may accept His calling by confessing like this: *God, I have been living without listening to your call for me. I want to accept the call of your son Jesus. Come into my heart.* You will be able to start living the call of God. God will start working to make you humble and use you to accomplish something great.