The Wasting of Your Life

Do You Ever Feel Like Your Life Isn't Going Anywhere?

When I was in college, it was discovered that my mom had breast cancer. I remember listening as my mother vomited violently after her chemo treatments. We watched as she slowly grew weaker and weaker and hope for her recovery faded. Eight years after her diagnosis, my mom passed away, her body a shrunken shell of what it once had been. My mom was perhaps the kindest person I ever knew. I cannot remember a single time she criticized someone. In the week following her passing, different ones told me about her many kind deeds. Even as she was growing increasingly feeble and neared the end, my mom continued to bring elderly women in the church to the store and help them shop. I struggled with accepting her fate. It seemed so unreasonable for God to let her die, and I was not the only one who questioned the goodness of God during her terrible suffering and after she passed away. It seemed to me that my mom's life was wasted; that she had much more to offer all of us and it did not make sense that the Lord let her die at such a young age. Perhaps you have had similar feelings. You have felt like God has wasted your life or the lives of others.. This is perhaps one of the most common criticisms of Christianity and faith in God. Why are so many good lives wasted and the potential they had once cast aside? Our big idea is a deep and monumental one. God is perfect love and all-knowing wisdom so you can trust Him with your life.

Is there a complaint more frequently voiced by both young and old that this? "You wasted my time." I recently mentioned in a sermon Jesus calling three of his disciples to join with him as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is rarely discussed but notice carefully the precise wording of Jesus' directive. **Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."** (Matthew 26: 36 NIV) There is no mention of any sort of "spiritual assignment" like praying or going over the Scriptures or anything other than just sit and wait. At this time of great crisis and coming horrific suffering, Jesus did not give the three any other task than to patiently sit and wait for Him. Most of us would have been on our phones while we waited, left with nothing at all to do but twiddle our thumbs. The disciples didn't waste their time. They slept. It was only later, after Jesus woke them up and reminded them of what they were to do, that He told them to pray so they would be protected from temptation. Before that though, the disciples clearly believed they had nothing to do, that Jesus was in fact wasting their time when there were more important duties to attend.

I see something similar with David. As a young teen, the Lord had the prophet Samuel anoint David as king of Israel. It isn't like David didn't do important and valuable things soon afterward. He killed Goliath and led the Israelite armies into battle, triumphing spectacularly. But he wasn't made king. David spent years hiding from the current king of Israel, living in caves in the desert doing nothing to help the cause of God or advance the agenda He had for the nation of Israel. It certainly would have seemed a colossal waste of time. David had to wait a full decade before he took on the crown of one tribe of Israel Judah and another seven years longer before the full nation of Israel was his to rule. You see something similar in the New Testament. Paul, after he was born again and baptized spent three years doing nothing of note in Arabia. We don't know why he was there for so long but from an outsider's perspective, it seems to have been a missed opportunity to make an impact for God's Kingdom. But then when you read all that Paul suffered as God's missionary, you have to wonder what was up there. **Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.** (2 Corinthians 11: 24-26 NIV) One might fuss about all the suffering Paul met but I feel there is a bigger question. Why was so much of Paul's life wasted having to go through so many troubles? He could have focused on writing more books of the Bible or speaking to more crowds of people if he didn't have to put up with so many distresses that clearly had to have slowed down his ministry.

I was recently thinking about the prophet Jonah and his calling to go declare the coming judgment of God to Nineveh. **The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."** (Jonah 1: 1-2 NIV) He of course fought against going because he hated the Ninevites and wanted them destroyed. Finally Jonah relented and did preach throughout Nineveh and a great number of the people there repented and asked for God's forgiveness. God was merciful and the city was spared. But it wasn't long before the people of Nineveh returned to their evil ways and God brought about their

destruction. Was it a waste of Jonah's time to send him to Nineveh if the colossal city was going to be conquered and devastated anyway? James, the brother of Jesus had just gotten started as a Disciple when he wound up being executed by Herod. Why did God waste James' time training him to be an Apostle if James would never have any sort of ministry?

One of the most common questions asked in religious circles is, "Why does God not do this or that rather than what He has done?" All the time people, even fine Christian ones, wonder why God does what He does because they think He should do things differently. One of the most promising futures anyone has ever had was John, better known as John the Baptist. How many of us were ushered in by an angel announcing our coming birth? Not me. John was. **But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.** (Luke 1: 13-15 NIV) His father was a priest who raised him to know and understand the Scriptures. His mother a great woman of God. Raised from day one to be a faithful child of God, equipped to have a ministry of tremendous effectiveness, anointed by God. When he set up camp in the desert regions of Israel, great crowds came to hear him preach. He was swamped by repentant men and women wanting to be baptized by him. He had the sort of ministry countless numbers of students going into the ministry dream of having. He was so powerful in his preaching that he was mistaken by countless numbers as being the promised Messiah. But of course he wasn't, and John the Baptist made that clear. At the height of his popularity and success, John was arrested and soon executed.

What do you make of this? If you were one of John's close friends or maybe someone in the crowd who heard him speak, you might very well have wondered what God was thinking? Why would he waste this great talent and faithful man like this? Consider John the Baptist's response to his friends complaining about the growing popularity of Jesus and his own diminishing role. **He must become greater; I must become less.** (John 3: 30 NIV) Literally it reads, "**He must continually increase, and I must continuously be diminished**." This is the proper way for every Christian to think and for full disclosure, it will be the way it is for every one of us, Christian or not. Christ will continually grow bigger and more important to us and our way and opinion of things will diminish in value. Many have lost the Lordship part of the relationship with God. Most see Him as a good buddy or a life counselor but not as LORD. As long as you question His actions, you are setting yourself up as Lord over Him. You are becoming greater, and the actual God is diminishing in your life. The Bible has no room for the theology that questions the wisdom of God. **Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"** (Romans 11: 33-34 NIV) Consider this declaration. **I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.** (Isaiah 46: 9c-10 NIV) Satan inspired Eve to question the wisdom of God and there has been no end to it since. You may not understand why Christ does what He does but the One who created the universe with a simple word from Him has your life figured out for you and you can be confident He knows what He is doing. Keep in mind when you start to question why God has done what He has done, remember He is complete and total love Always. **And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.** (1 John 4:16 a, b NIV)

It takes faith to believe that God always knows what He is doing and all He does is due to His love for the world…for you. There are two decisions every person must make in order to live free of fear, worry and doubt. Decision one. God is Love and Master of all that is and all that will be. Decision two. My life is His to do with as He sees fit. You will not have peace or joy for that matter until you reach these two conclusions. How could Jesus go to the Cross and carry out the mission of bringing salvation to the world? He had settled these two matters. The Father is love and master of all that is, and His life belonged to the Father and He could do with it as He saw fit. Here is the big idea. God is perfect love and all-knowing wisdom so you can trust Him with your life. Take a deep breath and become like the Apostle Paul and James and John and all other people of faith who have trusted Christ to take care of them. Say this simple prayer to God. You are love and you know what is best for me and everyone else. My life is yours to do with as you see fit. Amen.