

The Beauty of Quiet Lives

by J.R. Miller

A life of quiet power and effectiveness is not measured by the noise we make in the world, but by the benefits and blessings we leave behind in other lives.

Scripture: Matthew 6:2

Topics: "Humble Service", "Quiet Influence"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound impact of quiet lives, contrasting the loudness of worldly success with the silent yet powerful influence of those who serve humbly and without recognition. He illustrates that true effectiveness is measured not by public acclaim but by the blessings left behind in the lives of others. Miller draws parallels between the silent workings of nature, such as the dew and the sun, and the quiet ministries of God and Jesus, who both operated without seeking fame. He encourages believers to live in a way that scatters blessings unnoticed, embodying the spirit of Christ by seeking to uplift others rather than seeking personal glory. Ultimately, he reassures that no life lived for God is wasted, as every act of kindness contributes to the building of His kingdom.

Transcript

Many people measure a man's power or effectiveness--by the noise he makes in the world. But this standard is not always correct. The drum makes vastly more noise than the flute--but for true, soul-thrilling music and soothing power--the flute is a thousand times more effective. Young men, when they start in life, usually think they must make all the noise they can--else their lives will be failures. They must make their voices heard loud above the din and clamor of the world--else they must remain unknown and die in obscurity. But thoughtful, observant people always prove how little real power there is in "the bray of brass."

Life is measured by its final and permanent results. Not by the place a man occupies before the public, and the frequency and loudness of his utterances--but by the benefits and blessings which he leaves behind him in other lives--must his true effectiveness be rated. It will be seen, in the great consummation, that those who have wrought silently and without clamor or fame--have in many cases achieved the most glorious permanent results.

There are great multitudes of lowly lives lived on the earth, who have no name among men, whose work no pen records, no marble immortalizes--but who are well known and unspeakably dear to God, and whose influence will be seen, in the end, to reach to farthest shores. They make no noise in the world--but

it needs not noise to make a life beautiful and noble.

Many of God's most potent ministries are noiseless. How silently all day long, the sunbeams fall upon the fields and gardens! And yet what cheer, what inspiration, what life and beauty, they diffuse! How silently the flowers bloom! And yet what rich blessings of fragrance do they emit! How silently the stars move on in their majestic marches around God's throne! And yet the telescope shows us that they are mighty worlds or great central suns representing utterly incalculable power. How silently the angels work, stepping with noiseless tread through our homes and performing ever their tireless ministries for us and about us! Who hears the flutter of their wings or the whisper of their tongues? And yet they throng along our path and bring rich joys of comfort, protection, guidance and strength to us every day.

How silently God himself works! He gives his blessing while we sleep. He makes no ado. We hear not his footfalls, and yet he is ever moving about us and ministering to us in ten thousand ways, and bringing to us the rarest and finest gifts of his love.

Then who does not remember the noiselessness of our Lord Jesus' human life on the earth? He did not strive or cry out, nor did men hear his voice on the street. He sought not--but rather shunned, publicity and notoriety. His wondrous power was life-power, heart-power, which he shed forth in silent influence among the people--but which is pulsing yet in all lands, in millions of hearts, and in all the vast abodes of redeemed spirits.

And many of our Lord's earthly servants have caught his spirit, and work so quietly that they are scarcely recognized among men as workers. In their humility they do not even suppose themselves to be of any use, and mourn over their unprofitableness as Christ's servants, and yet in heaven they are written down as among the very noblest of his ministers. They do no great things--but their lives are full of radiations of blessing. There is a quiet and unconscious influence ever going forth from them, that falls like a blessing on every life that comes into their shadow; for it is not only our elaborately-wrought deeds, that leave results behind. Much of the best work we do in this world, is done unconsciously. There are many people who are so busied in what is called secular toil that they can find few moments to give to works of benevolence. But they come out every morning from the presence of God--and go to their daily business or toil, and all day, as they move about, they drop gentle words from their lips, and scatter seeds of kindness along their path. Tomorrow flowers of the garden of God spring up in the hard, dusty streets of earth--and along the paths of toil in which their feet have trodden.

More than once in the Scriptures, the lives of God's people in this world are compared to the 'dew'. There may be other points of analogy--but especially noteworthy is the quiet manner in which the dew performs its ministry. It falls silently and imperceptibly. It makes no noise. No one hears it dropping. It chooses the darkness of the night, when men are sleeping and when no one can witness its beautiful work. It covers the leaves with clusters of pearls. It steals into the bosom of the flower, and leaves a new cupful of sweetness there. It pours itself down among the roots of the grasses and tender herbs and plants. In the morning there is fresh beauty everywhere, and new life. The fields look greener, the gardens are more fragrant and all nature glows and sparkles with a new splendor!

Is there no suggestion here, as to the manner in which we should seek to do good in this world? Should it not be our aim to have our influence felt--rather than to be seen and heard? Should we not desire to scatter blessings so silently--and so secretly that no one shall know what hand dropped them?

The whole spirit of our Lord's teaching confirms this: "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:2-4

Translated into daily life, these injunctions would seem to mean that we are not to seek to have all our benevolent acts published in the newspapers. They would seem to mean that we should not desire publicity and human praise for every generous thing we do, every sacrifice we make, and every kindness we show. They seem, indeed, to imply that we should even take pains not to have our good deeds made known at all--that we should seek to perform them so silently and secretly that the world may never hear any report of them. When the motive is to receive praise of men, or to exhibit our goodness--the act loses its beauty in God's sight.

This test applied may find many of us lacking. Are we willing to be as the dew--to steal abroad in the darkness, carrying blessings to men's doors which shall enrich them, and do them good, and give them joy--and then steal away again before they awake to know what hand brought the gift? Are we willing to work without gratitude, without recognition, without human praise, without return? Are we content to have our lives poured out like the dew to bless the world and make it more fruitful--and yet to remain hidden away ourselves--to see the effects of our toil and sacrifice all about us--in brightened homes and bettered character, in beauties and joys springing up, in renewed society, in good institutions, and in benefits prepared by our hands and enjoyed by others--and yet never to hear our names spoken in praise or honor, perhaps to hear the shouts of applause given to the names of others?

And yet is it not thus that we are to live as followers of Christ? Honor is to be sought for Him. We are to seek to be blessings in the world, to breathe inspiration everywhere, to shed quickening influences upon other lives, to impart helpfulness and noble impulse to all we meet, and then to disappear, so that men may not praise us--but may lift their hearts to Christ alone! Florence Nightingale, having gone like an angel of mercy among the hospitals in the Crimea, until her name was enshrined in every soldier's heart--asked to be excused from having her picture taken, as thousands begged, that she might drop out and be forgotten, and that Christ alone might be remembered as the author of the blessings her hands had ministered. That is the true Christian spirit.

And in this way we may all learn to live too--if we will. In this way countless lowly ones have lived, and are living continually.

There are mothers who sometimes fret because their spheres of usefulness seem so circumscribed. They long to be able to do grand things, like the few who are lifted above the common level, and to be permitted to live their lives on the mountaintop, in the gaze of the world. But they, in very truth, have far grander fields than they dream. No one who lives for God and for love--can be called obscure. Do not the angels watch? Does not all heaven behold? Is anyone obscure, who has heaven for an amphitheater? Then who can tell the mighty, far-reaching influence of the life of a lowly mother, who lives for her children? Mothers have lived in hardship and obscurity, training sons to move the world, and they have lived to good purpose.

The best work of the true parent and teacher is quiet, unconscious work. It is not what a man says or does purposely, and with direct intention, which leaves the deepest mark in the world, and in other lives--but it is

the unconscious, unpurposed influences which go out from him like the fragrances from a garden, whether he wakes or sleeps, whether he is present or absent.

God seems to blight the things that we are proud of--and to make them come to naught. Then, when we are not intending to do anything grand, he uses us and our work for noble purposes, and to make lasting impressions on the world and its life.

It is the quiet, unheralded lives--that are silently building up the kingdom of heaven. Not much notice is taken of them here. They are not reported in the newspapers. Their monuments will not make much show in the churchyard. Their names will not be passed down to posterity with many wreaths about them. But their work is blessed, and not one of them is forgotten.

Not a life lived for God--is useless or lost. The lowliest writes its history and leaves its impression somewhere, and God will open his books at the last, and men and angels will read the record. In this world, these quiet lives are like those modest lowly flowers which make no show--but which hidden away under the tall plants and grasses, pour out sweet perfumes and fill the air with their fragrances. And in heaven they will receive their reward--not praise of men--but open confession by the Lord himself--in the presence of the angels and of the Father!

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