

Things That Are Worth While

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller emphasizes that a life lived for others and in accordance with God's will is truly worthwhile, regardless of worldly measures of success.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:25, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 10:42, Luke 6:38, 1 Corinthians 3:12-14, Galatians 6:9, Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Timothy 6:18-19, Hebrews 6:10, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "True Success", "Living a Life of Service"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of living a life that contributes positively to the world, contrasting worldly success with the true value of humble Christian living. He argues that a life spent in service, love, and faithfulness, even if it appears unsuccessful by worldly standards, leaves a lasting impact that enriches and beautifies the lives of others. Miller illustrates that true worth is found in selfless acts and the cultivation of character, which ultimately leads to eternal rewards. He encourages believers to focus on doing good, as even small acts of kindness can have profound effects. The sermon concludes with the reminder that our lives should reflect values that endure beyond this world.

Transcript

There are things which are not worth while. If a man lives seventy years, and then leaves nothing good behind him, nothing which will stay in the world after he is gone, enriching it, beautifying it, sweetening its life--has it been really worth while for him to live?

Or suppose that in his threescore and ten years a man lives to do evil, speaking words which become seeds of unholiness, scattering influences which cause blight, doing things which hurt other lives--who will say it has been worth while for him to live? He may have been a splendid success in a worldly way, amassing money, winning fame, getting honor, his later years a blaze of glory, his funeral one of magnificent pomp; yet has his life been worth while?

There are things which are worth while. A man spends his seventy years in humble Christian living. He fears God, and walks after God's commandments. He makes no marked success according to the world's standards. He is even spoken of by others with a sort of pity, as a man who never has been successful. Yet all the while he has lived honestly and faithfully in his place. While other men have been fighting for position, scrambling for honor, thinking only of advancing and pleasing SELF--he has been giving out his life in generous love, serving others, doing eternal good. He has not gotten on in the world, and his hands are empty at the last. But there is a success which is not measured by the standards of this vain world.

There is an invisible sphere in which values are not rated by dollars and cents, but by their spiritual and eternal character. In that sphere, a cup of cold water given to a thirsty one in the name of Christ will count for more than the piling of a fortune for SELF. Hence it is that a man who has seemed unsuccessful, but nevertheless has been doing good all the while in Christ's name, living unselfishly, has really achieved a success which lifts his name to high honor.

Sometimes in the country, you will see an old water-wheel outside of a mill. The water fills its buckets, and all day long it turns round and round in the sunshine. It seems to be working in vain. You see nothing that it is doing by its constant motion. But its shaft runs through the wall; and within the mill it turns the stones which grind the wheat, and the bolts which prepare the flour for the bread that feeds hundreds; or runs the looms which weave the fabrics that keep many warm in winter. There are lives which with all their ceaseless toiling, seem to be accomplishing nothing; and yet they reach through the veil into the sphere of the unseen world, and there they make blessing and benefit which value is incalculable.

Some godly people become discouraged because they do not seem to get on in life. They work hard--but can scarcely make ends meet. As fast as they earn--they must spend. A father toils through the years, bringing up a family--and dies at last a poor man. Other men who began with him as boys--succeed and grow rich. He feels that he has failed. But consider what he has really achieved.

To begin with, work itself is one of life's best blessings. This man's years of daily task-work have built up in him many of the best qualities of true, worthy character, -- promptness, accuracy, faithfulness, patience, persistence, obedience. Work, too, has given him health, has kept him from many an evil, has knit in him strong muscles and bones, has wrought in him a spirit of confidence and independence.

Consider, too, the value of his work to his family. He has provided a home for his household where the wife has presided with love and gentleness. Through his toil he has furnished means for the education of his children. In his own life he has set them an example of honesty, truthfulness, unselfishness, diligence, and faith. Dwelling himself near the heart of Christ, he has made an atmosphere of heavenliness in his home--in which his family has grown up. He has taught them the Word of God, and has given them books to read which have put into their minds and hearts pure, inspiring, and elevating thoughts. One by one they go out of their father's house to become influential in building up homes of their own, carrying with them and in them--a heritage of Christian character which shall make them blessings in the world.

Though this good man leaves no money and no monument of material success--yet his life has been well worth while. He has given to the world something better than money. He has shown it an example of a true and faithful life, in conditions that were not always inspiring. He has maintained in it a godly home, keeping the fires burning on God's altar, and putting into the lives of his household, the influences of true religion. He has trained his children, and sent them forth to be useful members of society, new centers of good influence, new powers for righteousness. His name may be forgotten among men--but the blessing of his life and work, will stay in the world forever. It is worth while to make sacrifices of love in order to do good.

In India they tell the story of the Golden Palace. Sultan Ahmed was a great king. He sent Yakoob, the most skillful of his builders, with a large sum of money, to erect in the mountains of snow the most splendid palace ever seen. Yakoob went to the place, and found a great famine prevailing among the people. Many were dying. Instead of building the palace, he took the money, and gave it to buy bread for the starving people. At length Ahmed came to see his palace, and there was no palace there. He sent for Yakoob and learned his story, then grew very angry, and cast the builder into chains. "Tomorrow you shall

die!" he said; "for you have robbed your king!" But that night Ahmed had a wonderful dream. There came to him one in shining garments, who said, "Follow me." Up they soared from earth until they came to heaven's gate. They entered, and lo, there stood a palace of pure gold, more brilliant than the sun! "What palace is this?" asked Ahmed. His guide answered, "This is the palace of Merciful Deeds, built for you by Yakoob the wise. Its glory shall endure when all earth's things have passed away." Then the king understood that Yakoob had acted most wisely with his money.

This is only a heathen legend--but its teaching is true. If we are doing true work, we need not concern ourselves about visible results. Though in self-denying life we build no palaces on earth, we are piling far nobler walls beyond the skies. The money we give in service and sacrifice of helpfulness, may add nothing to our bank-account; but it is laid up as treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

It is worth while to turn away from our own cherished plans any hour, to do the things of love that God may send to our hand. It is not easy for us to have our own ways broken into. We do not like to have our pleasures and our congenial occupations interrupted by calls to do services for others. Yet no doubt these very things are oftentimes the most splendid things of all that our hands find to do. They are fragments of God's will, breaking into the schedule of our own will, pieces of angel ministry to which we are called in the midst of our worldly work.

Whatever adds in even the smallest way to the world's brightness and cheer is worth while. One who plants a flower in a bare place where only bleakness was before, is a benefactor. One who says an encouraging word to a disheartened neighbor, gives a look of love to a lonely one, or speaks a sentence which may become strength, guidance, or comfort to another--does something worth while. We never know how small a thing may become a blessing to a human life.

It was worth while for David to write the Twenty-third Psalm to go singing everywhere to the end of time. It was worth while for Mary to break the alabaster vase, pouring the nard on the head and feet of the Master; all the world is sweeter ever since from the perfume of her ointment. Every singer who has sung a pure, joyous song--has given something to earth to make it better. Every artist who has painted a worthy and noble picture, or made the smallest thing of beauty which will stay in the world--has added something to the enriching of our human life. Every lowly Christian who has lived a true, courageous life amid temptation and trial--has made it a little easier for others to live right. Everyone who has let fall into the stream of this world's life wholesome words, good words, divine lessons--has put into the current of humanity, a handful of spices to sweeten a little the bitter waters. It is always worth while to live nobly, victoriously, struggling to do right, showing the world even the smallest fragments of divine beauty.

It is worth while to be a friend. No other privilege is more sacred, no other responsibility is greater. It is indeed worth while to be a friend. It is to come into people's lives with hallowed and hallowing influences, and then never again to go out of them. For to be a friend at all is to stay forever in the life. God never takes from us, a friend he gives. Therefore the privilege granted to a few rare spirits of being the friend of many people is one of earth's most sacred gifts. To stand by others in their time of joy and in their hour of faintness; to guide them when the way is perilous; to comfort them in the day of sorrow; to be their counselor in perplexity; to be the inspirer in them of noble thoughts, gentle sentiments, upward influences; and then to sit beside them when they are entering the valley of the shadow of death--no ministry on earth is holier and diviner than this.

One of our poets has told us that our life is a leaf of white paper on which each of us may write his word or two--and then comes night. What are we writing on our little leaf? It should be something that will bless those who read it. It should be something fit to carry into eternity; it must be most beautiful and worthy for this. It should be something which we shall not be ashamed to meet again, for this leaf will appear in judgment, bearing our word or two, good or bad, just what we put on it; and by this we shall be judged.

It is well that we do only things that are worth while; things that are right and true and pure and lovely, things that will last forever. "The world passes away, and the lust thereof--but he who does the will of God abides forever."

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