

NO “HIDDEN FIGURES’ IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

Date: 17-08-2025

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27

1 Corinthians 12: 12-27

“¹² For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹ If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now there are many members, but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³ and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, ²⁴ whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, ²⁵ so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

²⁷ Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.”

I want to say this right at the very beginning. In the kingdom of God, there is no such thing as just a little thing. Every faithful act is treasured by God. Paul compares the church to the human body, reminding us that we don’t consist of one member alone, but many. The foot, the ear, the eye, the legs, the hands – each has been arranged by God as He chose, and placed exactly where He wanted.

It would be ironic if all of us were a single eye. We’d have fun rolling into each other as we go along, as we come to church. I don’t know what we’d do with the thresholds, but we’d probably bump up. Or if we just came with hands, we’d all be on handstands. That would be funny. But God has made us different and yet, He has made us all connected.

So, we cannot say, “Because I’m different from someone, I don’t belong to the body of Christ.” You do. Nor can we look at one another and say, “Because you’re not like me, I have no need of you.” You do. Every part has a very specific role, and each is needed for harmonious, synchronized movement of what God calls us to do together.

In fact, Paul says, “On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.” I’m going to keep coming back to this particular phrase because that’s where I was being drawn in this narrative – this line that the parts of the body that seem to be weaker, that seem to be invisible, that seem not to be noticed, are the parts of the body that are indispensable in God’s economy of things. So, it’s impossible for you to think I’m useless in the body of Christ. What I do is so insignificant. Others are doing far more than I am. But that’s not right thinking as far as God is

concerned. Every job we do, every task He calls us to do, whether in public or in private, on a massive scale or a very small one, is a holy calling. God sees it. God acknowledges it and writes it up in heaven's record as obedience.

This truth is beautifully illustrated in this movie that came out in 2016 called *Hidden Figures*, which tells the story of three brilliant African-American women, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, whose mathematical genius and engineering skills were crucial to NASA's space program in the 1960s. While the astronauts' names became household names, and their launches made headlines, these women worked quietly behind the scenes, solving problems and making decisions that literally made these missions possible. For decades, their contribution went largely unnoticed by the world. But without them, history would have been very, very different.

And what's true for NASA is even more true for the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 12:22. *On the contrary*, he says, *the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable*.

God's kingdom advances through countless hidden acts of obedience – prayers that are whispered in secret, acts of service that no one applauds, sacrifices that only God sees. Public calling comes, of course, with public responsibility. But hear this, beloved, the size of the platform doesn't measure the size of your obedience. In heaven's record, it is faithfulness, and not fame, that marks true greatness. And just as NASA couldn't have succeeded without those hidden figures, the body of Christ can't function without those who serve quietly in the background.

Paul reminds us that in God's perspective, what seems to be something that's very small, is actually indispensable to the work that he is doing. So when Paul says this, He's actually challenging one of the deepest instincts that we have as humans – the tendency to assign value based on visibility, size and recognition. That's what we always attach value to.

But in the Corinthian church, here's what they were doing. Some believers were elevating certain spiritual gifts above others. The more flamboyant, more visible gifts like prophecy and tongues were being paraded while other gifts that seemed unimpressive to the people there, were being dismissed.

And Paul actually flips this kind of thinking on its head. He says, in essence: The very parts of Christ's body that you think are the least important are the ones you actually cannot do without. Think of your own body – the heart, the lungs, the kidneys, they're rarely seen, but you can't do without them. You can probably live without a finger, without an eye or an ear.

And Paul is making the same point about the church. God's work hinges on people and roles that sometimes never make the headlines but keep the whole body alive and healthy. This is how God's kingdom works. He sees the unseen things, the little things that are done in His name, in obedience to His will, things that are unnoticed by anybody else, things that you do in the closet maybe. Things that nobody else sees, God sees. Heaven measures greatness not by platform, spotlight or applause, but by faithfulness in whatever God has called you to do or God has placed in your hands.

The widow in Luke 21 put in two small coins, and it was deemed to be even more than others who gave out of their plenty. The unnamed boy in John 6 gave up his lunch, and thousands were fed. An elderly prophetess named Anna prayed for decades for the Messiah and finally had the joy of actually seeing the Messiah.

In every case, what looked small to others was indispensable to God's plan. And Paul's point is this: You may not see the eternal weight of what you do for God, but heaven already does.

The Lord laid just this one thought on my heart this week, that I began to work with it. There are so many who look at the things that they do for the Lord, and say, "This is so insignificant. It really doesn't mean anything at all. It is so not seen. Nobody even knows that I do it." I think the word for you today is that God does. God sees, and it is noted down in the ledger in heaven. History eventually recognized the contributions of these women, but heaven's ledger never misses a single unseen act of obedience.

Paul says that the parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable. I'm just going to keep on repeating this phrase until some of you who think that you are dispensable will begin to trust that word and see yourselves as part of the things that God does to bring His kingdom forward. When Paul says this particular statement, he's actually giving us a spiritual reality check.

The kingdom of God doesn't run on celebrity power or human applause. It moves forward because of the often unseen, ordinary, faithful work of people who may never stand in the spotlight. And just like in a human body, the organs you never see, the heart, the lungs, the liver, are the ones that you can't live without, so in the body of Christ, the people and roles that might seem least important are often carrying the weight of God's mission.

And so, whatever you do or are doing, maybe you've just begun to see yourself as not as good as somebody else, or not as talented or blessed as somebody else. You just keep doing small things. And the word for you today is : God sees, God knows, God understands, and God makes a note of it every time you do something in obedience. The little servant girl who pointed Naaman to the prophet Elisha. The little boy who offered his lunch. They weren't household names, but their obedience opened the door for God's purposes to unfold.

I grew up listening to my mom sing. She would sing everywhere – in the kitchen, when she was doing housework, everywhere. Because of this, I grew up with this knowledge of hymns. One of the songs that she sang went like this.

Do not wait until some deed of greatness you may do,
Do not wait to shed your light afar;
To the many duties ever near you now be true,
Brighten the corner where you are.

Brighten the corner where you are. Sometimes that's where we see ourselves, in corners hidden away, thinking that we are completely insignificant. And yet, that little act of service that you do in that corner is noticed in heaven and recognized.

Intercessors praying behind closed doors. The volunteers who quietly set up chairs before anyone arrives. The faithful encouragers who write small notes to people or make calls to lift someone's spirit. Parents teaching children at home to learn the scriptures. God's kingdom advances because of these hidden acts of obedience. They may seem weak, small, or even ordinary in the world, but they are the very things God uses to sustain His people, to reach the lost and prepare the ground for possibly more visible moments of ministry.

In heaven's record, these are not supporting roles. Not at all! They are essential, irreplaceable, and rewarded by God Himself. I like this little ditty that brings this thought home.

The work that's done where none can see,
In quiet rooms of prayer.
Is work that shapes eternity.
Though earth knows not it's there.

The astronauts got the headlines, but the hidden workers made these missions possible. And in the same way, God measures greatness not by fame but by faithfulness. The members of the body which seem to be weaker are absolutely necessary for the work that God has here in the world.

God's measure of greatness is radically different from ours. In our world, greatness is often tied to visibility. We celebrate the person on the stage, the leader with a large following, or the one whose name is widely known. But in God's kingdom, greatness is never about the size of the audience. It's about the depth of one's obedience.

Consider these scriptures:

Matthew 25:21 *His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set over much. Enter into the joy of your master."* Faithfulness in small things is honored by God.

1 Samuel 15:22 *"Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams."* God values obedience above grand gestures. Faithfulness is the currency of heaven.

Jesus made this clear when He said, "Well done, good and faithful servant." He didn't say: Well done, good and famous servant, or well done, good and successful servant. No! Well done, good and faithful servant. And this means showing up every day, day after day, in the assignments that God has given us. Whether or not anyone notices, whether or not the results may seem or look to be unimpressive, whether or not it ever trends on social media. Show up and do what God is inviting you to do.

Charles Colson once said, "It is not what we do that matters, but what a sovereign God chooses to do through us. God doesn't want our success. He wants us. He doesn't demand our achievements; He demands our obedience."

In God's eyes, the widow quietly dropping two coins into the temple treasury meant so much. Faithfulness is about loving God enough to obey Him fully. The woman who anointed Jesus' feet with costly perfume received His commendation, not because of the size of the act, but because of the heart behind it. And that must and should always be our motivation that we do it out of love for God. Obedience to God is motivated by love for God.

Here's the beautiful truth. When we are faithful in the little, God sees it as great. Faithfulness in small things is honored by God – not the size of the work but the heart of obedience. And what the world overlooks, heaven celebrates. The applause of men may fade very quickly, but the reward of God for a life lived in steady obedience will last forever.

I'm going to close with this. The women in Hidden Figures never set out to be famous. They simply did the work that was in front of them, day in and day out, knowing that it mattered, even maybe when no one else seemed to notice. And NASA's success in large part rested on their quiet calculations, their unseen labor, and their unwavering commitment.

The same is true in the kingdom of God. You may not see your name in neon lights. You may never hear applause for the prayers that you've prayed, the kindness you've shown, or the burdens that you've carried. But in God's eyes, those hidden figures in His kingdom are the indispensable ones. So be encouraged this morning. be encouraged.

The same God who saw Katherine Johnson at her desk, Anna in the temple, the widow with her two coins, the little boy with his fish, sees you too. and He calls you to be faithful wherever you and whatever you are called to do. And one day, may it be that you hear His words saying to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

I want to close with this poem. It says:

"In quiet rooms where no one sees, you serve the Lord each day.
No crowd applauds, no headlines shout, yet still you choose His way.
The chairs are set, the prayers are prayed, the hands reach out in care.
The work is done, the seeds are sown, though none may know you're there.
The notes of grace, the whispered prayers, the kindness, meal or smile,
each hidden act, though small it seems, God counts as great.
So go with joy to serve your Lord. It tasks both great and small.
For He has seen your hidden work, your faith, your love, your all.
And when you stand before his throne, His words might light your face.
Come enter now my holy place, dear child of mine, well done."

May all of us hear those words when we stand one day in front of His throne. And until that day, may everything that God calls us to do be done with a sense of great joy, however small the task may be, because it is indispensable in God's economy.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we have often looked at some of the things that we do and wondered if there was any point in doing them. But Your word reminds us, Lord, that the small things, those things that even may not be seen, are absolutely necessary for the functioning of Your will here on earth so that we may see Your kingdom, Lord, here before we actually see it with you.

So help us, inspire us. I pray for those who may be just feeling that they're useless or not worthy or dispensable. Lord, I pray that faith would arise within them, that they would just be lifted up by Your spirit and they may recognize, Lord, that the little things that they're doing are like the nuts and bolts that hold big things together, indispensable to the finished work.

Thank You, Lord, that what we do is much as you see it. Thank You that we are Your masterpiece. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.