

James The Less

The "Unimportant" Layman
Scriptures

Old Testament: Isaiah 25:4-8

New Testament: Luke 6:13-16

When your name is in the Bible and it tells the world that you are the son of a certain man, and you are an apostle of Jesus, and that your mother was also a follower of Jesus, and that's all it says about you - that's not very much information to indicate that you were important. That's the unfortunate situation of "James the Less", "James the Little", or "James II". His father was named Alphaeus. We do not know his mother's name. He is listed 9th among the twelve in Matthew, 8th in Mark, and back to 9th again in Luke. His name does not appear anywhere else in the scriptures.

The other James - the brother of John, and one of the three - Peter, James, and John - of him we know quite a bit, but nothing of "James the Less". (Refer to Paul the Less and a complex) He may have been called "James the Little" because of his stature, and sometimes he was called "James the Second" or "James II". Of all the apostles, he is the most obscure. He remains in the background. He does not rise to biblical fame. He is the unimportant layman.

"James the Less" - the unimportant layman - is however, the "patron saint" - I mean patron saint in the Protestant sense - a representative - not a person to pray

to. He is the patron saint of the unknown, the numberless ones, the nameless millions who follow Jesus Christ.

In Acts: 8:4 we read "As for those who had been scattered, they went throughout the country preaching the Word." THOSE WHO? Who were these scattered Christians? What were there names? - I don't know.

Who were those hundreds, those thousands who spread the Christian faith - those who brought the Good News - the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world - those whose names are not recorded?

Paul - we know. Peter - we know. But who are these others? What were the names of those valiant Christians who were thrown to the lions, those Christians who were true to Jesus to their death. I don't know. In the long history of the church, Augustine we know. Luther we know. Calvin we know. Wesley we know. But how few we really know.

For every general there are probably ten thousand privates. James the Less - Apostle unknown - unimportant is a symbol of the privates in God's army. Why were the [redacted] the influential, the famous, the powerful, the successful not chosen by Jesus? Why were Nicodemus and the rich young ruler not in the company of the twelve? Why was a layman whose name is "James the Less" chosen?

Though the burden of the whole world lay heavy on Jesus's shoulders, though Corinth and Ephesus and Athens and whole continents with all their desperate need, were dreadfully near to his heart, though suffering and sinning were going on in chamber, on street corner, and in castle and slums, seen only by the Son of God - though this immeasurable misery and wretchedness cried out for a physician, he had time to stop, and talk, with and listen to individuals.

He associated with publicans, lonely widows, despised prostitutes, and tax collectors. He moved among the outcasts, the unwanted of society, wrestling for the souls of individuals. He appeared not to be bothered by the fact that they were not influential people, that they had no importance - no prominence - that they were not key figures, but only unfortunate, unimportant, lost Children of the Father in Heaven. He seemed to ignore, with a sovereign indifference the so-called great world historical perspectives of his mission when it came to one blind, unimportant, smelly beggar - a nobody who was never the less so dear to the heart of God and must be healed and saved.

And, that is why you and I - nobodies - are somebodies in His sight, and we can be in His company.

James the Less - unimportant layman - walked in the company of Jesus. In Luke 10/23-24 we hear Jesus say, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which you see and have not seen them".

James the Less - unimportant layman - saw Jesus heal the sick.

- Cast out Demons
- Raise the Dead
- Walk on Water
- Feed the Multitudes
- He heard the Sermon on the Mount
- He heard the Parables and teachings
- He heard the Stabbing remarks to the money changers in the temple.
- He heard the kind, empathetic, encouraging words, to those in need
- James the Less was there at the Last Supper.
- He was there in the garden

He was there in the city during the crucifixion
He was there at the Resurrection
He was there for the Ascension

We envy him? We feel we do not have the close contact with Jesus? Why not? He is the same yesterday, today, tomorrow, and forever.

We don't see him at work, why not? We should open our eyes to the kingdom positively at work in our world.

You say you can not here him preach, Why not? We have his words in our Bibles. We can read and listen and worship. ~~This unimportant apostle, James the Less, has nothing on us.~~ *AND LET OUR SOULS OPEN TO HIM.*

James The Less was chosen to see, to hear, to walk, to witness - as we have been. Jesus sent them out in twos as advance parties into every town and district where He intended to go. In Luke 10/1-3 he tells them " There is a great harvest, but only a few are working in it which means that you must pray to the Lord of the Harvest that He will send out more reapers. Now, go on your way. I am sending you out like lambs among wolves."

The twelve went out. The seventy were sent out, and side by side with the famous Peter, James and John, James The Less- the unimportant layman - proclaimed the Gospel. He brought the Good News as a witness to cities, towns, and villages. Scholars tell us it was in Palestine and Egypt.

Today's church seems to be too much of an institution where people believe correct things, do correct things, and say correct things, but give off nothing that excites the imagination, the curiosity, and the souls of the people of the world.

You don't have to be a great musician to interest

5

people in music - the music of the masters. All you need is the enthusiasm for their music and to spread your enthusiasm to others by inviting them to listen to ~~you~~ their music.

James the Less - the unimportant layman - was a witness. That much we do know about him. Jesus sent out the twelve and James the Less was one of them. He continued to witness for Christ until he died a martyr.

This unimportant layman, chosen to witness by Jesus himself, also had his name written in heaven. Unknown on earth, but known to our Father in Heaven.

The disciples returned from their witness tour rejoicing - "Even the devils are subject to us through thy name" they said to Jesus. And in Luke 17/ 18-20 Jesus tells them "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven". Now, that's true cause for Joy! The world does not take note, but God, your Heavenly Father, does. Nameless ones, unimportant ones to the world are not nameless or unimportant to God. He is the God of the individual - up close and personal.

We are familiar with the masters of words - Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Longfellow. But, who are the nameless thousands who reduced guttural sounds into a written language? Who laid down the rules of grammar? Who gave us languages? We don't know, but without them the masters of literature could never have written a word.

We know the names of the giants of music - Bach, Beethoven, Handel, Mozart, ~~Handel~~. But, who captured the sounds of nature? Who translated them into notes, composed the scale, and gave the tools to the musicians of the world? The nameless, unknown thousands.

Now and then a Hollywood luminary puts his or her hands or feet in the cement in front of Grauman's Chinese Theater. They are thrilled - they tell the public because their hands or footprints are forever immortalized permanently in the concrete of Hollywood Blvd. Immortalized? Permanent? Forever in concrete? Not hardly. One day an earthquake comes, and all of it is gone. Babylon thought it was permanent. Rome thought it was immortal. Concrete? Nothing in this world is forever is cast in concrete.

Jesus said "In this rejoice not, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven". You don't have to be a star to get your name in that book. All followers of Jesus, all who have faith in Him, all who have been born anew, all who are new persons in Christ shall have their names in the Book of Life.

All week long, you work at a job, in plant, in office, or store. You take care of a family, tend little ones, look after the sick, pack lunches, file papers, operate computers, wash dishes, and do all the other necessary things associated with living. Sometimes you feel that what you do

does not really matter - that you can't change the world - that the world cares little or nothing about who you are or what you do. The world goes on. Only a few people know or notice you, then you are forgotten. You think that what you do or say means little in the total scheme of things. In the church you are just another layperson - just another name on the list. You feel you are insignificant - unimportant.

Really? So is one atom. You can't see one single atom, but there is enough power in the atoms in a thimble full of water to run an ocean liner across the ocean to Europe and back.

You are unimportant? So is one snowflake - so light - so fragile - yet when joined with other millions of snowflakes the countryside is blanketed in a quiet quilt of white. Highways are blocked. Locomotives stalled. Planes grounded. Cities brought to a standstill.

You think you are unimportant - just another layperson in the church? Actually bread is more valuable than diamonds. Water is more precious than pearls.

God's biggest problem is not with what we call the important people. There are only a few of them. God's biggest problem is with you and me. We think that what we are, and what we do is not important to his Kingdom or to this church.

All heaven wonders what kind of persons you and I are going to be - what we are going to do with our important talents and lives. How do we know that this is so - that we are important in God's sight. You see, there stands a cross. That cross tells you and me how much we mean to God. It tells us that Jesus came and died for us - you and me. It expresses God's love for us. James the Less, the unimportant layman, is a symbol of the millions of nobodies. Nobodies? Somebodies! Persons of worth for whom

Jesus died." Children of God. Citizens of the Kingdom
whose names are well known to the King and recorded in
the Book of Life.

hook around 100
Amen
imphre
A

Let us pray.

Father, we pray that you will continue to make yourself known to us through your Word. We ask your forgiveness for sometimes thinking that what we do and say is unimportant. That we are unimportant, unknown. When in truth we are your children - children for whom you care very much - children who are important to you and the work of your Kingdom and this church. We pray that you will encourage us to raise our heads and our sights - to step out - to stand tall as known, important, confident, laypersons to proclaim your Gospel in word and deed. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

BENEDICTION

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

- AND THE LOVE OF GOD

- AND THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

BE WITH EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU NOW AND FOREVER MORE.

AMEN