

**Church work and Kingdom Calling**  
**Ephesians 4:1-13, 1 Corinthian 12:12-20**

Friends, how many of you were here on the Sunday when Bharath Samrat came and shared his testimony with us?

If you weren't here I'll fill you in – Bharath Samrat was born to a Hindu family, and he was born with a condition called femoral dysplasia – which means he was born without knees.

And those of you who had the chance to meet him know that his condition means that he stands 3' tall - which presents some physical challenges to say the least.

And Bharath's testimony is an amazing story of how God intervened in his life and he survived the odds as a baby and grew up overcoming all sorts of emotional, physical, and spiritual challenges.

And it was especially amazing to hear how someone who had all sorts of reasons to be angry with God and hate God, share how much he loves Jesus now after Christ changed his heart.

And when I first heard him share his story he said something that struck me... now I don't know if he repeated it word for word when he was speaking here two Sundays ago or not – but what I remember him saying was “I serve a Great God – I can do better!”

And this was after he had proved that he could participate in all sorts of sports in highschool –including basketball, he graduated with good grade from his studies and had landed a good job and his family was doing well.

I mean for someone who wasn't expected to live more than a couple years after he was born – he's doing pretty good – and yet because of whom He loved and served – A great God... He wanted to do more; you could say he wanted to go from good to great for God.

And I'm glad he's pursued that friends – because it's meant that He came here to Canada, to Calgary, to study and work and to share with others what Christ has done in his life – and we were blessed to hear that.

So we've benefited from Bharath's desire to go from good to great – we were encouraged and our faith in Christ's power was strengthened.

Just like last week when we looked at how King David wanted to give his best to God in worship and how that desire to give God his best in the past had motivated David to write the Psalms - and who hasn't been encouraged or blessed by one of the Psalms at some point?

Friends when we go from good to great in our own lives and in our life together as a church – it blesses others! It enriches the lives of others; it can bring people to faith in Jesus. Now if that's not enough to get you to say "I serve a great God – I can do more, I can do better, I want to take it to the next level..."

Then consider these words of Jesus in John 14:12 *"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do **even greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father."*

Friends Jesus wants us to go from good to great – Jesus wants us to take our lives to the next level both individually and as a church, He desires for us to be more, and do more for his Kingdom.

Not because it will cause Him to love us any more than he already does – He's shown us how much he loves us... the bible says *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Rom 5:8)

But friends we are called to greatness because we are the body of Christ – we are his hands and his feet through whom He is working in this world to establish his rightful rule over all things.

That is our kingdom calling, and friends it is something that we need to live up to.

Ask any hockey fan what it means when a young player gets called up from the minor leagues to put on an NHL jersey?  
Ask any Canadian what it means when an NHL player is asked

to put on a Team Canada jersey? They will tell you it means there is greatness to live up to, that its expected those players will give their best and then some more.

And woe to the player who is called up and doesn't produce greatness! Being good enough is ok in the minor leagues but to play in the NHL and for Team Canada you need to be great!

So friends – when Christ puts his life in us and our lives in His – we put on that Team Canada jersey, we're called up to the NHL – we're being called to go from good to GREAT!

So – Paul writes to the Ephesian Christians *“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”* (Eph 4:1)

And Paul is urging us today too - Valleyview... life a life worthy of the calling you have received!

Now friends the good news is that greatness is not hard to achieve. Not when you consider what scripture reveals what God is doing to us after Jesus went to be with his Father.

*Acts 2:17 “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”*

And Ephesians 1:18-20 reveals to us that God is working in us - with the same power which He used to raise Christ from the dead!

And in our passage this morning Paul says *“to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”* (vs.7)

So with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit active in our lives in this way it's not terribly hard to go from good to great.

It's not something that we need to conjure up out of ourselves – the Holy Spirit is in us and He's ready to help us do more and be more for God – what we need to do is identify what's

blocking us, or rather what's blocking the Holy Spirit - from moving us from good to great, and we need to let go of it...

So last week we identified the fear of not having enough, and the problem of allowing our lives to become too busy as obstacles which keep us from giving our best to God.

And this week we want to identify another roadblock – the body of Christ is missing body parts!

In other words it's like there are some players who have been drafted to play on Team Canada who aren't showing up for the practices and games, and the team is weaker because of it, we're not as great for God as we could be on our own or together.

And when I speak about being great for God – you can define that in a number of different ways – you can look at worship attendance, worship participation, actual church membership, the ability to run programs, meeting our financial targets, helping people in need, being well organized...

We can look at how many people are praying, how often they are praying, how our Christ Care groups are doing, are we reading the bible, are we studying the scriptures, are we doing what it says – there are all these ways and more in which we can be great for God as individuals and as a church.

And I'm sure that those players who are skipping out on the practices and games probably have "good" reasons, important reasons for doing so, but unfortunately the rest of us get used to operating shorthanded in church; and getting by with whom-ever and whatever is on hand.

But friends – does a church that "gets-by" and "manages" sound like the kind of church which Jesus had in mind when He said in "*on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not stand against it.*" (Matt 16:18 ) Not really...

That kind of church, those kinds of Christians, they are the ones who are going from good to Great – and they are advancing the Kingdom of Heaven against the kingdom of darkness and they are gaining ground!

Friends that's the kind of church Valleyview is becoming – because we serve a Great God, we can do more, we can be more for God's Kingdom, right here in the community where He has placed us.

And being great doesn't mean that we have to become a program sized church like Westside Kings or Rockepoint, they do a great job of running programs for people that want that sort of thing –

why do we need to compete as another program church in this area but we can be a great pastor sized church for this neighborhood offering all of our unique particular strengths.

But, regardless of the church size- every part of the body needs to be engaged in order to go from good to great.

In fact – being able to have all our regular members and attenders active and participating frequently and consistently in the life of our church would - in and of itself – be one way of going from good to great for God!

So what's standing in the way of that?

Well friends let's look at our scripture verses to see what God has to say to say about it.

You see we're not the first church to struggle with this challenge – the apostle Paul had to help the Church in Corinth deal with a similar problem that was keeping everyone from participating in the life of the Church.

The problem stemmed from the fact that the Corinthian Christians believed that some people in the church were more significant than others, and that some spiritual gifts were more desirable than others...

And that's somewhat understandable – after all in his the letter to the Ephesians, Paul says Christ gave the church, his body, "*apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers*" (4: 11)

So if some pastor is acting like they're God's gift to the church... well that's correct (somewhat)

Friends, these leadership positions and gifts and the responsibilities which go along with them are important – but they are not more significant than the rest of the body.

They are important because they are a critical part of how Christ's people are *“equipped for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”* (4:12)

But the rest of the body is just as significant as its leadership because it's the key to how God intends to spread his Kingdom into the world and into every area of His creation – sports, business, education, music, the arts, politics and so on...

So friends to go from good to great as a church we need to let go of the unbiblical notion that it's the minister's job to do church work, that it's the *“spiritual”* people's job to lead, to

help out and be involved... while the rest of us just help out occasionally when we can.

My job is to train you, to equip you, to help you, to mentor you so that you can do ministry in the church and then go back into your job, your family, your neighborhood, your school... wherever it is you are when you're not here and you can advance the Kingdom of God – and do it better and more effectively than you did before.

The goal of our Church is not to have everybody spending all their time doing church work, or being involved in church activities...

now I know that might sound surprising given all the time I spend emphasizing how important it is to attend worship, tithing and get involved in a Christ Care group...

But the goal of our Church is to get you trained, equipped and ready to go, to help us all *“reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to*

*the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”* (Eph 4:13) and then send you out as Christ’s hands and feet and mouths to pursue your Kingdom calling!

So in reality the reason why I emphasize your church participation so much is so that I can make sure you are getting the discipling you need to make you more effective in everyday life.

And that’s an important realization friends – to understand that if we are going to go from good to great as individuals in our Kingdom Callings outside of church – we need to spend a great deal of time inside the church.

We need the training that it takes to become engineers, doctors, lawyers, or hockey players and so on – we need to put in the time in our career to excel and advance –

but if we’re not getting the training to know how to be Christian engineers, Christian doctors, Christian lawyers, Christian hockey players, and so on... then as we talked about

last week we’re building with wood, hay and straw which will burn up when Christ evaluates our lives.

Here’s an example of what I’m talking about. A person whom I believe is your average Christian posted this little statement about work and life on Facebook. It says...

*“what's most important is to pursue and work at the things that will matter and last in your life and beyond... it doesn't matter if your career or pursuits are artistic, business oriented, socially focused, or hard for others to understand and value. What matters is that you leave a positive impact on the people who are important to you and that you work hard to do what best utilizes your gifts, passion and personality...”*

Sounds good – but what’s specifically Christian about this, our muslim, jewish and hindu friends could read it and agree with it as well...

We need to integrate our faith and Christian theology into our professions in a way that is far more profound and meaningful

than simply being passionate or hardworking, honest, ethical or moral people.

Because friends, while this sort of thinking is a good start... Christ calls us to great. We serve a Great God – we can do more, we can do better...

So yes friends – there is a great need to go from good to Great in our church life together, we need to make sure we are participating more, attending worship more, reading scripture more, studying scripture more, praying more, giving more, and personally taking on a responsibility for some part of the life of this congregation...

Because it is only as a part of the body of Christ that you will be able to go from good to great as an individual and discover how to truly integrate the specifics of the Christian faith into your family and professional life, where else are you going to learn this???

Friends, without Church Work there is no Kingdom Calling – You need to be an active regular part of the Body of Christ friends – this is why Jesus says...

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5)

But friends... we serve a Great God and we can do all things, great things... through him who strengthens us – so let us remain in Christ, and make those words a reality through encouraging everyone in Valleyview to engage and participate in the life of the church – and let’s go from good to great!

Amen!