

# Wayside Ministries

by J.R. Miller

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*J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes the importance of unplanned acts of kindness, or wayside ministries, in our daily lives and their profound impact on others.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 11:25, Matthew 25:40, Luke 6:38, Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 3:23-24, Hebrews 13:16, James 2:14-17, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 John 3:18

**Topics:** "Acts of Kindness", "Unintentional Ministry"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the significance of 'wayside ministries'--the small, unplanned acts of kindness that often go unnoticed but can have profound impacts on others. He contrasts these spontaneous acts with our more deliberate efforts, suggesting that the former may yield greater spiritual rewards. Miller illustrates how even casual interactions can uplift and encourage those around us, highlighting the importance of being mindful of our influence in everyday life. He encourages believers to cultivate a heart full of love and goodness, as this will naturally lead to unintentional acts of kindness that bless others. Ultimately, he reminds us that our true legacy may lie in these small, seemingly insignificant moments of grace.

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## Transcript

"I expect to pass through this world but once. If, therefore, there is any kindness I can do to any fellow-being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

There are two ways in which all of us work, and two classes of results which flow from our lives. There are things we do purposely--that we deliberately plan to do. We take pains to do them. We spend long years oftentimes in fitting ourselves to do them. They cost us thought and care. We travel many miles, perchance, to perform them. They are the things we live to do.

Then there are other things we do that have formed no part of our plan. We did not set out in the morning to accomplish them. They are unplanned, unpurposed things, not premeditated or prearranged. They are wayside ministries. They are the little things we do between the greater things. They are the seeds we drop by chance from our hand in the path, as we go out to the broad field to sow. They are the minor kindnesses and courtesies that fill up the spaces of our busy days. They are the little flowers and lowly plants that grow in the shade of the majestic trees--or hidden away like violets under the taller plants and shrubs. They are the smaller opportunities of usefulness which open to us--as we carry our great responsibilities. They are the things of which we take no note, and perhaps retain no memory--mere touches given as we hasten by, words dropped as we pass along.

We set no store by this part of our life-work. We do not expect to see any result from it. We pride ourselves on our great masterpieces. We point to them as the things which fitly represent us, the things in which we hope to live.

And yet oftentimes these unpurposed things are the holiest and most beautiful things we do--far outshining those which we ourselves prize so highly. I believe that when the books are opened it will be seen that the very best parts of many lives, are the parts by which they set no store and from which they expected no outcome, no fruits--while the things they took pride in and wrought with plan and pains--shall prove to be of but small value.

Our Lord tells us that the righteous shall be surprised in the judgment, to hear of noble deeds wrought by them of which they have no knowledge or recollection. No doubt there is a wondrous amount of good done unconsciously, of which the doers shall never be aware of, until it is disclosed in the future life.

It is said that when Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, returned to his native land with those rare works of art which have made his name immortal, chiseled in Italy with patient toil and glowing inspiration; that the servants who unpacked his statues--scattered upon the ground, the straw which was wrapped around them. The next summer, flowers from the gardens of Rome were blooming in the streets of Copenhagen, from the seeds thus borne and planted by accident! While pursuing his glorious purpose and leaving magnificent results in breathing marble, he was at the same time, and unconsciously, scattering other beautiful things in his path to give cheer and gladness.

And so, in all true living, while men execute their greater plans, they are ever unintentionally performing a series of secondary acts which often yield most beneficent and far-reaching results. There is a wayside ministry, for instance, made up of countless little courtesies, gentle words, mere passing touches on the lives of these we meet casually--impulses given by our greetings, influences flowing indirectly from the things we do and the words we speak--a ministry undesigned, unplanned, unnoted, merely incidental--and yet it is impossible to measure the results of these unintentional kindnesses.

We go out in the morning to our round of duties. and perform them with more or less faithfulness and effectiveness. But during the busy hours of the day--we find opportunity for doing many minor kindnesses. We meet a friend on the street whose heart is heavy--and we stop to speak a word of thoughtful cheer and hope, which sings in his ear like a bar of angels' song all day long. We ring a neighbor's door-bell, to inquire for his sick child, and there is a little more brightness in that sad home all the afternoon because of this thoughtfulness. We walk a few steps with a young man who is in danger of slipping out of the gospel way--and let fall a sincere word of interest which he will remember and which may help to save him.

All sorts of people come to us on all sorts of errands during the day. We cannot talk much to each, and yet we may drop into each heart--a word of kindness that will prove a seed of beauty. We meet people in business relations. To talk to them on Christian themes may be neither practicable nor expedient. And yet there is not one of them to whom we may not minister in some way.

One man has had sorrow in his home. His face carries the marks of sore struggle and inward pain. By a gentler bearing, a mellowed speech, a heartier hand-grasp or longer pressure, and a thoughtful expression of the sympathy and interest we feel, we send him away strangely comforted.

Another is staggering under financial burdens, and a hopeful word gives him courage to stand more bravely under his load. We are writing business letters, and we put in a personal sentence or a kindly

inquiry, revealing a human heart even amid the great clashing, grinding wheels of business--and it carries a pulse of better feeling into some dingy office and some dreary treadmill life far away.

Not one of these things have we done with any clear thought, or even consciousness, of doing good--and yet, like the flower-seeds the sculptor bore back amid the wrappings of his statues, they yield loveliness and fragrance to brighten many a bare and toilsome path.

Social life presents also countless opportunities for these wayside ministries. It would be hard to imagine anything more icy and cold, more devoid of the sweet charities of life, than much of the formal fellowship of society, especially in circles of wealth and fashion. It is regulated by arbitrary rules which leave no room for tender heart-play. It is oftentimes insincere. The staple of its conversation, is the emptiest of idle gossip or the most merciless dissection of character.

And yet what opportunities does this very social fellowship afford for the most beautiful wayside ministries! What words of kindness can be spoken! how often, too, where they are most sorely needed and craved! There are hearts starving under these icy formalities. There are gentle spirits amid all this mad whirl, that long for something true and real. There are sorrows under all this glitter. The doors are shut to those who come professedly to bring blessing. Even Christ stands outside, perchance, knocking in vain. There is no open entrance to any who would come with avowed intent to do good. And yet the Christian woman who enters the doors, even in the most formal way, may carry with her Heaven's sweetest blessings.

Many earnest Christians in early, primitive days voluntarily became slaves to gain access to the homes of the noble, that they might at least live out the holy religion of Jesus in the heart of their households, and perchance win souls for heaven. Missionaries study medicine that they may be admitted into the homes of the people as physicians, and while there in that capacity--they cannot but scatter some of the holy fragrance of the love of Christ. To those whose hearts are full of the spirit of grace, there are large opportunities for quiet and unpurposed usefulness, opened in the formalities of social life.

There need be nothing done ostentatiously; indeed, ostentation shuts the door at once. What is needed is a deep and sincere piety that breathes out unconsciously in face and word and act and manner, like the fragrance of a flower, like the shining of a star, like the irresistible charm of rare beauty, or tender music. Indeed, its unconsciousness is its greatest power! She who goes intending to say certain things or carry certain blessings or leave certain influences, may fail. But, going from house to house with a soul full of goodness, purity and love, with a heart sincerely longing to leave blessing everywhere, with a speech seasoned with grace and breathing kindness and peace--it is impossible not to leave heavenly influences in every drawing-room. Impulses are given to better life. Strength is imparted to struggling weakness. Comfort is breathed softly into hearts that are sore with grief. Flowers from heaven's gardens--are planted in earthly soil. Glimpses into a new and richer life, are given.

No woman with deep piety in her heart and Christlike grace in her life--can go in and out in the formal routine of social life and not unwittingly perform a blessed ministry of good, leaving behind her many a bit of brightness and many a lovely flower!

Although unnoted on earth and unprized--the results of such ministry may outshine in splendor, in the great disclosure, the things to which most toil and thought have been given.

In every life there are these opportunities for wayside ministry. Indeed, the voluntary activities of any life, do not by any means measure its influence. The things we do with deliberate intention, make but a small

part of the sum-total of our life-results. Our influence is as continuous as life itself. We are leaving impressions all the time on other lives. There is a ministry in our handshaking, in our greeting, in the most casual conversation, in the very expression we wear on our faces as we move along the street, in the gentle sympathy that adds such a thrill of strength to fainting weariness,

"Like moonlight on a troubled sea,

Brightening the storm it cannot calm."

To meet some people on the sidewalk and have their cheery "Good-morning!" makes one happier all day. To encounter others is as dispiriting as meeting a funeral-procession. There is always a magic potency in a sunny face. There is a holy aroma always about unselfish love. A joyful person scatters gladness like song-notes. A consecrated Christian life sheds a tender warmth wherever it moves. What a wondrous sphere of usefulness is thus opened to everyone of us! Preparation for it is best made--by heart-culture.

It is purity, truth, helpfulness and love--that sanctify the influence. Full of Christ, wherever we move--we leave brightness and joy. Amid the busiest scenes, when engaged in the most momentous labors, we carry on at the same time--a quiet, unintentional ministry whose results shall spring up in our pathway like lovely flowers, or echo again in the hearts of others in notes of holy song, or glow in human lives in touches of radiant beauty!

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