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Dance and be Extraordinary

by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

Psalm 139 1-6; 13-14

*You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.*

² *You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

³ *You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*

⁴ *Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.*

⁵ *You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.*

⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.*

¹³ *For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

¹⁴ *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;*

DANCE AND BE EXTRAORDINARY

PRAYER

Lee Ann Womack's song "*I Hope You Dance*" ends with "*When you get the choice to sit it out or dance, I hope you dance.*"

So, are you sitting it out, or are you dancing? I'm talking about rising above the ordinary to claim the extraordinary life that God has created you for and called you to. I'm here to tell you that you have the choice to sit it out or dance, and I'm here to invite you to dance. I'm here to invite you to be extraordinary.

Now some of you will say, "This doesn't apply to me. There's nothing special about me. I'm just ordinary." But the justification of your greatness can be backed-up with Scripture and with a quote from Nelson Mandela.

So what does Scripture say in support of you being extraordinary? As stated in Psalm 139, *“it was you who formed me...I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”* *“Fearfully and wonderfully made.”* That’s not ordinary.

Jesus said: *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* (John 10:10b) The King James Bible uses the word “abundantly”, and I love that wording. Jesus came so that we might have life and have it abundantly. When we live by the example of Jesus Christ, we fan that spark of divinity within us into a flame that consumes ordinary living and allows us to be extraordinary.

Nelson Mandela said: “We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. We are born to manifest the glory of God that is within us.” These words were exquisitely spoken by Morgan Freeman who portrayed Nelson Mandela in the 2009 movie Invictus. It is an awesome movie worth watching.

Who are you to be extraordinary? Who are you not to be? You are a child of God, born to manifest the glory of God within you. President Mandela took office at a time of great crisis for his country, when the future of South Africa depended on people being willing to be extraordinary. And I believe we are in a time and place now that demands the same of us. Hunger, poverty, exclusion, disease and injustice are all right here in our community, but we can change all of that if we are willing to be the extraordinary people God made us to be and who Jesus showed us how to be. (Adapted from unknown author)

So we may see ourselves as ordinary, but God sees differently. We tend to compare ourselves to others and find ourselves wanting. We compare ourselves to who we want to be and are disappointed. But God doesn't work like that. God sees the possibilities, not the shortcomings. And we must do the same. God gives us what we need to be extraordinary. God knows how we were made and for what extraordinary purpose.

Sometimes fear is our second obstacle. Fear and isolation pull us back to the ordinary and stop us from being the extraordinary people God calls us to be.

We all have different gifts to bring to the Christian community called the Church. But we are one Body of Christ. We do things differently, but we are of the same family. We bring these different talents to the Body of Christ as we follow the Great Commandment to love one another.

Perhaps the worst thing about fear is its insidious tendency to isolate us. When we are afraid, often we draw in on ourselves, shutting out others at just the time we need them most, isolating us from the love of God and from the love of others.

It's a terrible feeling to be alone and afraid. Can you recount a situation in which fear kept you isolated from the much-needed love of God or others?

Sometimes all we need is a connection to one other person to remind us that we are not alone. When you find yourself feeling alone, I hope you find the courage to reach out to someone. And when you see someone who's all alone, I hope you reach in to them. When we open our hearts to each other, we can get past our fears, and rise above the ordinary.

And don't forget that God is always with us. Our problems are real, but we need not fear them when we walk – or rather dance – with the Lord.

Jesus preached a new commandment-- a commandment to love one another. You have promised in your baptismal commitment that you will love one another. You have promised to love your neighbor as you love yourself. You have promised in that love to trust one another in faith—to challenge the fear that closes the heart. Micah spoke God's word in challenging the people of Israel to not put their trust in lifeless sacrifice but to walk with God, to do justice, love mercy and walk with reverence with God. (Adapted from Justin Stone)

Whether or not we will live into the extraordinary lives that God has created us for depends primarily on two things: What is in our hearts and what we do with our hearts?

What is in our hearts: Jesus Christ is our refuge and strength. When we allow the love of Christ into our hearts, when we focus on Christ, our perception shifts, our priorities are reordered. We can see God's plan for us, and we have the wisdom and courage to live it out.

My role as pastor is not just to take care of you. The role of the pastor is to excite you, to stir you up so that you can hear the voice of God in new and different ways. The role of the pastor is to bring new and different people into the community of Christ—ones that perhaps you haven't seen in your community

I come to my new appointment with a servant's heart, humbled by this great responsibility and grateful for the confidence that the Salem church family showed in naming me as your Pastor. "I will work tirelessly each day to ensure that the mission of this church is fulfilled and that its ministries and congregation remain united and strong."

As I begin this journey with Salem United Methodist Church, I will remember the humility that Micah speaks of in Micah 6:8: He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. I will sing a song of faith with the melody that God has taught me. I will share and teach the people of Salem United Methodist Church the story that has been written in my heart by the Holy Spirit. But I look forward to discover and celebrate with each and every one of you your stories and God's journey with each and every Salem disciple. I praise God and acknowledge that Salem has been proclaiming God's Word for many generations. I humbly thank each of you for allowing my family and me to become a part of that story.

Do you believe that you are created and called to be extraordinary?

Ordinary is sitting it out. Extraordinary is dancing.

You're all called to dance. You're all made for it. When you get the choice to be ordinary or extraordinary, choose your destiny the plan God has for you. Choose extraordinary. You get these choices all the time, to reach out, to rise above, to open your hearts to one another. What will you choose? Will you choose to sit it out or dance? I hope you dance.

Amen.

GO FORTH:

As you go from this place, may God bless you with the wisdom to see the extraordinary life that is planned for you, and the courage to dance it. For when we dance together, we can change the world. Amen.