

## Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August Caroline Watkins

### Ordinary people with an extraordinary God

Good morning and welcome to the Father's House devotional for Wednesday. You've got me again – I always feel like I should start with a disclaimer that this is going to be simple and it's going to be a reflection of where I am, because that's what I find I can do. I can talk about where I am and hopefully in the course of it manage to point you to Jesus, which is my main aim in doing this.

I want to talk a bit about being ordinary, which sounds a bit, 'why would you want to hear me talk about being ordinary'? But, in the course of it, talking about being ordinary with an extraordinary God.

This last couple of weeks I have felt *very* ordinary and so I imagine there will be other people who are a bit like that. I know there are people who have a very big vision and have this sense of adventure and want to do extraordinary things and it's amazing when you're in their company. And then you find yourself thinking I feel very small and ordinary. That's not a 'woe is me' it's more of a 'in this little place in Shaftesbury I'm a little person just going out every day doing my job or doing stuff in my house'. Sometimes I find that even the stuff that we say as Christians in the church, it doesn't scare me, but it sometimes makes me go 'oh my goodness this is all too big for me. I'm just this quite small and ordinary person.' We talk about things that are extraordinary, we talk about healing the sick and raising the dead. We talk about winning the world for Christ and all those things which are amazing and extraordinary and in the Word. Jesus said, didn't He, you will do greater things than these, so it's not that it's not all in the Word. But sometimes when you're a small person in a small place you can feel a bit like 'how does that work for me in my little life and what do I do?'

I think we all have those scriptures that we go to, and I know we have to be a little bit careful because we can gravitate to the things that suit us and we need to read the whole scripture and read the things that make us feel 'wahh', as well as the things that we feel comfortable with. But there are two scriptures that I want to read to you this morning, because I want everything I say to be based in scripture, not just talking off the top of my head.

I think one of the things I was thinking was, what is it that You want of me Lord. What is my purpose, what is the thing that You're asking of me in this life, this very short life in this very small place. The one that comes to mind probably for a lot of people is the Micah 6 verse 8 scripture. the context of it is God saying what have I asked of you, I haven't asked you to do huge amazing things, I haven't asked you to sacrifice everything, I haven't asked you anything that's too burdensome for you (Israel) and He says, 'what does the LORD require of you? Except to be just, (or to love justice) and to love mercy (or kindness) and to walk humbly with your God.' There's that kind of sense in your inside where I think, yes ok Lord, not that I can do those things out of my own self, but it kind of grounds me again. Sometimes when I get a bit 'oh my goodness, where am I and what am I doing', I need to ground myself again in scripture, I need to go back to the Word and I need to find out what He says. So for me the fact that that came to mind was really helpful and I thought it is about being just in your everyday life and loving mercy and loving kindness and walking humbly with God, and walking it with Him in everything.

As I started to think about it a bit more and look at the scriptures, I realised that I love the fact that God is so, so big – this is what I said to you, this is all going to be pretty simple stuff, it's not complicated – but when I come back to that place of looking at the scriptures, I realise again how extraordinary and how amazing God is. How big God is and that whole sense of Him, creator of heaven and earth, the fact that everything belongs to Him, His sovereignty, His faithfulness, His goodness, and it settles my heart again. I think you need, I certainly do, need to see how big God is. Because even that small glimpse that we as human beings can get of how big God is, how set apart,

how holy, how extraordinary, how far above us He is and how we can't put Him in a box, we can't think of Him in human terms, because of who He is, that actually, if we grasp even a little bit of who He is, that then enables us to go, goodness yes this is the God that I trust with my life. This is the God I can put my faith in. This is the God that I can obey without having to worry. Because I know that He knows everything. He knows the beginning from the end. He knows everything about my life, that He loves me, that He's promised so much in His Word about how He will only do us good. I need that big picture of Him in order to put my hand in His and say yes Lord, whatever You ask of me, I will walk with You.

It's almost like that moment in history where Jesus came, that moment where suddenly Jesus arrives on the scene and we have Jesus who is the very image of God, so we can look at Him and say this is God, He is God. Suddenly we have more to the picture, because God is so big, there is so much of Him to see, to find out about. What we see in Jesus, is God who comes down, God who walks the earth. God who lives in one sense an ordinary life – He did incredibly extraordinary things and He's God – but if you think about it He lived a very ordinary life. He was a son and a brother, a carpenter and a friend. He walked the earth and He got tired and hungry. He knew what it was to be incredibly joyful, because it says He was joyful above everybody else. He had this amazing joy, but He also knew pain and sorrow and friendship. So He walked in the same way we do and He did it in a small place. He did it in a small town. He did it with a small group of people He would have known really well. When He started His mission He started to do the most extraordinary things but for 30 years He lived an ordinary life and loved God and did His utmost to please God.

I think that idea of walking this life pleases God, I think that has to be one of the most important things for us. Sometime we can get overwhelmed by all the stuff out there, even the great stuff that people say and we can be 'oh my goodness, I should be doing this or that, or I'm not doing enough'. All that stuff, which I presume happens to all of us, where we think am I doing enough in my ordinariness. And then I think our life is about walking humbly with Him and actually what I'm feeling is we can feel very ordinary, and that's ok, that's fine, but what we have got is the most extraordinary God. So actually when we walk with Him, close to Him, in relationship with Him, extraordinary things can happen in our ordinary walking with the Lord; we can find that extraordinary things happen. The only thing I think we need to do is to have an awareness of Him as much as we can.

There's a lovely book about Practising the Presence of God, by a monk called Brother Lawrence, who talks about having that practice, that discipline, having that constant awareness of God all of the time; which is kind of amazing because we get distracted often by things, but having that ability to check in and now that God is there and with us and we're walking with Him, having a sense of what He's doing during our day. My feeling is the more we can do that, the more that the extraordinary will happen in the midst of the ordinary. I might not raise the dead today, it seems fairly unlikely, I don't want to say no, but it's unlikely that I'll raise the dead today, but I might get the opportunity to pray for somebody. I might get the opportunity to encourage somebody, I might have a chance to say something which seems very ordinary to me, but makes a huge difference to somebody else.

The reason I'm talking about this I think, is I'm talking to all those people who feel very ordinary and sometimes get a bit 'I'm not sure how much of this stuff I can do', and I am constantly challenged by the fact that actually it is just about walking with Him and walking in the Spirit and being aware of pleasing Him. I was having a conversation on Monday with all the guys in the office, we've just changed our car and we were talking about it. I was saying I don't particularly like driving with Andrew in the car, apologies to Andrew, but I would say he's a bad passenger to drive. I find that when I'm driving and he's in the car, I'm really conscious of him. I think it was George who said, does he grip the seats, which, you know, he has done on occasion, but most of the time it's not even that. It's not even that he does anything in particular, but I'm so aware of him sitting, maybe it's the

slight tension in his body. And I thought to myself, you know I'd really like to be more and more like that with God. Andrew and I have lived together for 30 years so obviously we do know each other, so even if we don't talk to each other we often do know what each other feels and thinks about things because we know each other so well, so I can tell when he's feeling a bit tense or whatever. So I thought wouldn't that be lovely to get to that point with God, where it's not that He has to get a megaphone and tell me what to do, but it's because I'm walking in relationship with Him. And I'm conscious of Him there even though I can't see Him and I have this understanding of what He's feeling, what He's wanting, what His will is, in that moment. That's quite exciting.

It's funny, whenever I'm feeling very ordinary, what helps me a lot is to start reading the Word, or start worshipping, I've probably said all these things before so I apologise, but somehow when you connect to an extraordinary God, your own ordinariness doesn't seem to matter so much. You're simpleness, your smallness, I don't mean in a self-deprecating way in a sense of 'oh poor me', but just the fact that I'm a middle-aged woman in a small town. It's just that actually God can do extraordinary things even in the every day. I think all we need to be is aware of that. If we can be aware of that fact, it is possible that at any point in our day, God can whisper in our ear and say it might be good to say this thing, or good to do this thing, and the impact on someone else, the impact of kindness, of mercy, of encouragement, can be extraordinary, because it ripples outwards. Even if we never see all of the results of what we do every day, even if that person never comes back to us and says something – though I think the Lord often allows that to happen to encourage us – the things that we say, the things that we do, the ordinary stuff, can have this amazing ongoing impact that's like ripples in a pond. It's like spreading life and spreading love.

I'm hoping that all makes sense. I know that I ramble and I'm going to close soon, but one thing I meant to do is to give a shout out to David and Jill Perry, who are extraordinary, amazing people and they are the ones that transcribe all of these devotions. So all of these devotions are available on the website as audio, so that's a bit scary if you've done one when you think it's there available for ever. But David and Jill then transcribe them so they're available in written form. I do photocopies for a number of people who prefer to read them. So they do a great job and I have to apologise to them and you can write this in the devotion, Jill and David, I'm sorry that I ramble because some people are really good and they write notes, but I tend to ramble and so they have to sit there and transcribe it all so I apologise for that, but it's the only way I can do it [*no worries D&J*]. And thank you so much to them. You know people around you who do what are in some ways quite ordinary things, just has such an impact on you, and I'm going to stop now because I've probably run over time.

I want to pray and say have a good day and bless you so, Father thank you so much that we don't have to be extraordinary because You are. Thank you that even if we feel very ordinary, it doesn't matter because You're extraordinary. And I thank you Lord that if we are even a little bit aware of You during the day, then You can use us, work through us, to bless, encourage, remind people around us and maybe one day raise the dead, I'm not shutting myself down from that Lord. So Father thank you for those who are listening or will listen and Lord I want to bless them. Amen.