

Unsung Heroes of Faith

“Bezalel and Oholiab”

[Exodus 31:1-11](#)

Through our three-week sermon series, “Unsung Heroes,” we are learning about some individuals whose names are not known or not familiar to us despite the significance of their contributions to the work of God. Last week, we reflected on the story of the widow of Zarephath, a nameless, poor foreigner, who saved and preserved the life of the prophet Elijah through her radical hospitality. Today, we turned to Bezalel and Oholiab.

How many of you have ever heard of these names before? Honestly, until I began to search the names of unsung heroes in the Bible, they never caught my attention. I am sure I saw their names whenever I was reading the book of Exodus, but obviously they did not register in my memory. Perhaps, it’s because they are not main characters in the Bible. We know about Adam and Eve, the first man and woman; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the three patriarchs; Moses, the fearless leader; Gideon, Samson, and Deborah, the judges; David and Solomon, the kings; Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, the prophets; Mary and Joseph, the holy parents; Peter and Paul, the first church leaders. These are the big names whose stories are quite familiar to us.

However, the Bible is filled with many more names that we seldom hear about despite the great contributions they have made to the story of God’s saving work. We are not familiar with their names, and some of them are nameless, like the widow of Zarephath. These were people who served quietly in the background. And Bezalel and Oholiab belong to this group of unsung heroes.

Their time was when the Israelites were wandering through the desert after they were delivered out of Egypt. Early in their journey, they were building a tabernacle, which would serve as a dwelling place for God as well as their gathering place for worship. It would be a large tent which was constructed of 48 15-foot tall standing wood boards and 4 woven layers of curtains and furnished with valuable materials. You can find the details of the tabernacle and its construction in the book of Exodus (chapters 25-31 and 35-40).

Building the tabernacle created an excitement among the people of God. As soon as Moses made an appeal about the building project, people began to come together with needed resources. Those with skills and willing hearts came to help construction, while others brought their freewill offerings to carry out the work. This happened day after day, to the point that Moses had to tell them to stop giving because there was already more than enough to do all the work! Isn’t it incredible? I wish I can make such a speech to you one day.

God called Bezalel and his associate Oholiab to oversee this exciting project. Let’s hear again the first part of the divine call:

The Lord spoke to Moses, “See, I have called by name, Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to

devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.”

God is telling Moses that Bezalel was already chosen to oversee the work of building the tabernacle. Bezalel was an incredibly accomplished artisan. As revealed in scripture, he was a metalworker, jeweler, gem-cutter and woodworker. Later in Exodus, he is described as an engraver, designer, embroiderer and weaver (Exodus 35:35). With his ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, Bezalel certainly had the qualifications necessary to serve as the project manager for the job. Above all, Bezalel was filled with "divine spirit." Interestingly, this is the first biblical record of someone being "filled with the Spirit of God." You might think that it was a big character like Abraham, or Moses, or at least a priest. But no, it's Bezalel, a blue-collar craftsman, a layperson, an unsung hero!

We do not know much about Bezalel's background except his brief genealogy recorded in today's text. What we know about him is that he was a man of many gifts and skills and that he used them to give glory to God and benefit his people and community. I do not imagine that his gifts and skills were developed overnight when he became filled with the divine Spirit. Instead, he was most likely born with artistic gifts that later further developed through his training and work. And, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, he was able to use them for the building of the tabernacle -- for the glory of God and the benefit of the community.

That is how God works in our lives, too. God has given us different gifts and God wills us to use them not for our own pleasures and benefits but for God's glory and to serve others. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to use whatever gift God has given to us to help others (1 Corinthians 12:7) and to serve others (1 Peter 4:10). What gifts do you have? What are you good at? What are you passionate about? Use your gifts, your resources, your passion to give honor and glory to God, to help and serve others. And look for such opportunities here at the church and out in the world.

Building the tabernacle was a process requiring beautiful teamwork. Though Bezalel seemed to possess all the gifts and skills he needed to do the work himself, God did not leave it all to him. God provided him with an excellent associate, Oholiab. Like Bezalel, he was a gifted craftsman, and he also had the skill to teach others. But, the task was not left to them alone, either. There were many other gifted artisans who joined them in the building project. God equipped not only the two leaders but also all other workers who would carry out the task with them with their needed gifts.

And it works the same way for the ministries of the church as well. Gifted men and women work together in partnership to serve and to help, some here on the church campus, and some in the community. The building project God has in mind requires more than one talented leader or a dynamic duo. Our various ministries, the work of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and building God's kingdom on earth, requires more than just some of us. A task this big is done through the teamwork of many gifted men and women who faithfully serve and willingly give, empowered by the Spirit of God.

Some of those workers gather weekly to accomplish their tasks, while others come out monthly. And, a number of these ministry teams have been working together for many years, yet they still enjoy their teamwork. Serving quietly behind the scene, in the kitchen, in the office, in the yard, up in the balcony, back in the sacristy, or in the education building, some coming out early in the morning and some staying late at night, they might not be seen as leaders, but they are indeed unsung heroes who help our church to be the church God calls us to be.

But, using one's gifts to help and serve others is not something believers do only in the church. Jesus commands us to go into the world as his witnesses - to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to

clothe the naked, to visit the imprisoned, to heal the sick, to comfort the grieving, to help the helpless, and to bring hope to the hopeless. And, there are people, believers and unbelievers alike, who are already doing this work of helping and serving others.

CNN Heroes is a television special which honors men and women who have made extraordinary contributions to humanitarian aid and made a difference in the lives of people and their communities. Nominees are introduced in the fall, and people are invited to vote online for their choice to be named the CNN hero of the year. In 2007, when the program started, 18 individuals were introduced. But, since then, the number of nominees each year has been limited to just 10. So far, 128 heroes from around the world and across the United States have been honored. The things that they have accomplished, the difference that they have made in people's lives is absolutely incredible.

About 10 days ago, CNN revealed the names of 10 nominees of 2019 CNN Heroes. Here they are:

- Stacie Alonso who has cared for over 1,400 pets at a pet shelter she runs for women victims of domestic violence;
- Najah Bazy who has helped more than 250,000 people in Detroit's impoverished community;
- Woody Faircloth who has fixed up 65 old RVs for families who lost their homes to Camp Fire;
- Freweini Mebrahtu who is changing the cultural stigma around women's periods in Ethiopia;
- Mark Meyers who has rescued 13,000 abused and neglected donkeys and burros;
- Richard Miles who is helping people transition and stay out of prison after spending 15 years in prison for a crime he did not commit;
- Roger Montoya, a professional dancer who has provided art classes, food, tutoring and support to more than 5,000 children and youth in New Mexico;
- Mary Robinson who helps children how to mourn;
- Afroz Shah, a lawyer in Mumbai who is on a mission to save the world's oceans from plastic pollution;
- Zach Wigal, a 29 year-old who has given video games to over one million seriously ill children in the hospital per year.

Like all others who were honored in the past, each of this year's nominees of CNN Heroes started their work of helping and serving others alone on a small scale. But, when they expanded their work by enrolling others in their visions and recruiting volunteers, the impact of their work began to multiply. Yet, these individuals remained unsung heroes for many years until CNN named them heroes for their extraordinary actions of compassion and care for others. As the CNN's special program continues, many more new heroes will be honored. And, inspired by their stories, new unsung heroes will be born.

What stirs a passion in your heart? What are you good at? What gifts and skills do you have that you are not using to honor God and help and serve others? When Bezalel and Oholiab were called for the work of building the tabernacle, they were ready for the task. Do you have a gift that needs to be further nurtured and developed, so when you are called, you can give your best for the glory of God and the benefit of others? May we be blessed and bless the world through many wonderful gifts God gave us!