

1 Lent: Fearless Week Two: Fear of Not Mattering
February 28, 2010
Rev Ken Wratten at St. Stephen's

Along the way in our Lenten journey we are exploring the Christian response to fear. We know that some of the fears we experience are warning flags; like being afraid when somebody passes you on the road at 100 mph. But there are other fears we experience, which can overtake us, and disable us, and prevent us from being who God who us to be. One such fear is the fear of not mattering; of being insignificant.

I can relate to the experience of feeling insignificant; letting our life be defined by what we CANNOT do, rather than by what we CAN do.

I have experienced being one of those last people not chosen to be on a baseball team, or a touch football team, so that finally the coach says, 'ok you other guys, just divide up between the two teams?' I have felt that.

When my father would take me with him to the store, or the local car repair garage to get the car tires winterized, or to the farm implement store to get feed for the chickens we raised, people would say, 'and who is this?'. And my father would say, 'one of my tax deductions'.

I have written a paper that accomplished its purpose really well, developed an important customer relationship, invented a new procedure, something really good, and then had my boss take all the credit.

I have boarded flights on Southwest Airlines, where there are no seat assignments, but instead you are herded onto the plane to wrestle for a seat away from the rest rooms or the upset baby, shoving forward with the rest of the herd identified by Southwest as 'Group A'.

When I was 11 or 12 years old I remember visiting my cousin Kingsley, who is five years older. One summer visit he decided to teach me how to be cooler and more significant than anybody else in Adams. I could look like him; and he already looked like his hero, James Dean. He helped me slick my hair back into a DA; I had a comb sticking out of my back pocket; My belt buckle was moved to my left side; My watch was twisted on my arm so the face was toward the inside; and my shirt collar was up. I got some attention; from my parents, mostly, and from classmates, and I felt kind of

significant. Think of your own examples of feeling the fear of not mattering.

As teenager, I remember deciding that I needed to do *something* in my life that would make it matter. I decided that without children, at the end of my life, my affect on the world would just evaporate. Since I had no value of my own, I thought I had to create a value for myself through my children.

There are plenty of examples in Scripture of people who felt insignificant. In Exodus 3-4, God appeared to Moses on Mount Horeb, in the form of a burning bush. God told Moses that he had heard the cry of Israel in slavery in Egypt, and God was now going to send Moses to Pharaoh, to tell him to set God's people the Israelites free. But Moses said, "O Lord, I'm just not a good speaker. I never have been, and I'm not now, even after you have spoken to me. I'm clumsy with words." Later Moses said, "Lord, please, send someone else." Moses felt too insignificant to do God's work.

Fear of not mattering creates the result it dreads. We learn to be quiet, because we believe there is nothing we could share that could be of any value. We don't even try out for most sports, and when we do try out for a sport, we are as bad as we think we are. We are convinced that we don't matter very much, and so we don't try doing much that matters.

But this mindset of not mattering is completely contrary to what the Bible says. Listen to how important each of us is to God.

Genesis 1:26,27, Then God said, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life – the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and all... wild animals..." So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself, male and female he created them."

Jeremiah 1:5, I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman to the world.

Psalms 8:1,3-5, O Lord, our Lord, when I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man (*Heb phrase for a human*

being) that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

Ephesians 2:10, For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Scripture says that you are already significant. You matter. You have value. You are important beyond measure to the God who created you, and who has a specific plan and purpose for you.

Your significance, your importance, why you matter, and why your life matters, is not for what YOU can accomplish in this life, but it is because of **WHAT GOD CAN ACCOMPLISH through you.**

The fear of not mattering can disable you from letting God use you. But by trusting God's faith in you, and the value God has already placed on you, there are amazing, exciting, transformational things that God can accomplish through you; if you Fear Less, know that you matter, and trust God. Amen.