

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Unsung

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Beamonesque I had never heard the word until a few weeks ago, had no idea what it meant, but it is one of my new favorites. Here is the etymology; the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City had their fair share of memorable moments. After winning silver and gold medals in the 200 meters American sprinters, Tommy Smith and Juan Carlos raised their fist to salute black power and human rights. A high jumper named Dick Fosbury unveiled a very unconventional technique and won the gold medal, but there was one more moment etched into the memories of everyone who eye witnessed it. The long jump competition included gold medalists from the previous two Olympics as well as the world record holder, but it was a long shot long jumper named Bob Beamon who would pull off an upset of epic proportions. I'll show you a picture of what was going to be known as the jump. Sports Illustrated called it one of the five greatest sports moments of the 20th century. Bob Beamon took 19 strides; he planted his right foot, flew more than six feet into the air, threw his arms back and landed in the pit. The whole thing took six seconds, but it took more than 20 minutes to measure the jump and I'll tell you why. Because officials had installed an electronic measuring device that ran the length of the long jump pit and Bob Beamon out jumped it. They had to go and get an old fashioned tape measure and then they kept measuring 'cause they couldn't believe it. The world record at the time was 27 feet, four and three quarter's inches. Now in the hundred years before that, the long jump record had been broken 13 times by an average of two and a half inches. Bob Beamon obliterated the world record by almost two feet. No one else in the competition even eclipsed 27 feet. Bob Beamon landed 29 feet, two and a half inches from where he took off that my friend is Beamonesque.

It's an adjective means remarkable, spectacular. It means unexpected excellence. It's a result, far superior to anything previously accomplished, so that it's absolutely overwhelming to the point of being almost unbelievable. Oh, but it gets even better. You know, I love backstories. One of Beamon's teammates, Ralph Boston had won the Olympic gold in 1960. He was the world record holder. He was far more of a favor to win gold in Mexico City than Bob Beamon. But Ralph Boston had an eye for potential and a heart for mentoring young athletes. And so Ralph Boston took the 22 year old Bob Beamon under his wing and taught him to fly. Beamon fouled on his first two qualifying jumps, so the pressure was on. It was Ralph Boston who calmed him down, coached him up. And then right before the jump, he whispered these words in Bob Beamon's ear, (I'll put it on the screen). Take off early, you have room to spare. Give up two inches on the front you'll take two feet when you land. Your legs have never been as strong as they are right now at this moment. Your body weighs nothing. Your mind has wings, use them, fly up, fly out. Don't you feel like long jumping right now?

And that's what Bob Beamon did but it was Ralph Boston who gave him a script. Boston believed in Beamon more than Beamon believed in Beamon. Bob Beamon borrowed Ralph Boston's faith for about six seconds. So here's my question. Who's the hero of the story? Well, the answer is both of them, right? I mean c'mon Beamon that's pretty incredible; made headlines even got an 'esque' added to his name, added to the dictionary. But I don't think Bob Beamon

does what he did without Ralph Boston and that makes Ralph Boston the unsung hero. This weekend we kick off a new series at NCC called "Unsung". I could not be more excited. Love where we're going to go with this. The word unsung means unacknowledged, uncelebrated, unapplauded. Most of us are not going to break world records. Most of us are not going to see the world stage. Most of us are not going to be world famous and that's okay.

This isn't about impacting millions of people. It's about impacting people that God puts in your path. It's about impacting maybe the one person who will impact millions of people. Now, the Bible is full of unsung heroes. In fact, that's who Jesus seemed to celebrate the most Good Samaritan, widow gave two mites, four men who airlift their paralytic friend to Jesus, a little boy who gave five loaves and two fish, a woman who broke open the alabaster jar of perfume. They all have one thing in common. We don't even know their names. If that's not unsung, I don't know what is. Those are the unsung heroes and those are the profiles that we're going to unpack during this series.

Here's what I know for sure. Jonathan doesn't defeat the Philistines without the help of his armor bearer. David doesn't assume the throne without a bodyguard named Benaiah, which would make a great book. Jeremiah dies at the bottom of a very deep dungeon without the help of an Ethiopian named Ebed-Melek who pulls a Rapunzel and that's the tip of the Old Testament Iceberg. In the New Testament, Paul never regains his eyesight without a man named Ananias who risked his life to aid and abet a terrorist. And then Jesus could not have afforded to do what he did without a group of women among them, Mary and Joanna and Susanna who formed a hedge fund to finance his ministry. Here's the big idea, God loves using ordinary people like you and like me to make a difference. The Bible is a book about real people with real problems who make a real difference.

One more thing. There never has been, never will be anyone like you. That's not a testament to you, it's a testament to the God who created you and what that means is this. No one can worship for you. No one can serve for you. No one can take your place; it's why we have a core value. You are invaluable and irreplaceable and I might just add at the outset you make more of a difference than what you know.

And so if you have a Bible, you can turn to First Kings chapter seven, we will get there in a minute. The unsung hero I want to talk about this weekend is a man by the name of Hiram. Now, if you know your ancient Middle Eastern history, you know Hiram king of Tyre, hardly unsung, actually pretty powerful. More on him in a minute. But there was another Hiram who was also from Tyre. But this Hiram was an artist, he was an artisan. He achieved a level of notoriety, I mean c'mon he's in the Bible, right, put that on your LinkedIn profile. But, let's be honest, this is like being named Michael Jordan, but you're not the basketball player or the actor. I want you to hold that thought.

In the fourth year of his reign as king of Israel Solomon commenced construction on the temple in Jerusalem. It was a God-sized vision, especially for the 10th century BC. It employed 150,000 skilled laborers. It took seven years and it took tons and tons of timber. And that's where King Hiram enters the equation. He was an ally of Israel and this is who Solomon contracted for the timber. And so King Hiram cut down trees, put them on rafts, check this out, floated them down

the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to a port city called Joppa. And then those logs found their way to Jerusalem and they were used to build Solomon's Temple. Now in exchange for this timber, Solomon sent Hiram a lifetime supply of wheat and 115,000 gallons of olive oil. And that's where I usually say there's not going to be a quiz at the end of this message, okay.

But I think it's interesting, Solomon needed more than natural resources, he needed human resources. And so he sent a letter to King Hiram asking for an expert. Who did Hiram send? Hiram sent Hiram. And that's where we pick up the story. First Kings chapter seven, verse 13

"¹³ Now King Solomon brought Hiram from Tyre. ¹⁴ He was half Israelite, since his mother was a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father had been a craftsman in bronze from Tyre. Hiram was extremely skillful and talented in any work in bronze, and he came to do all the metal work for King Solomon. ¹⁵ He cast two bronze pillars, each 18 cubits high and 12 cubits in circumference."

Now a cubit was the length of a royal forearm, which I find funny because I'm not sure that a non royal forearm is really much different, okay, but it's about 18 inches and so what you're talking about is columns that are 27 feet high and 18 feet in circumference. These, I mean for nine 70 BC, this is pretty significant. Let me drop down to verse 19...

"¹⁹ The capitals on top of the pillars in the portico were in the shape of lilies, four cubits high."

And so you got to add another six feet, we're about three high now about 33 feet.

"²⁰ The capitals on the two pillars had two hundred pomegranates in two rows around them, beside the rounded surface next to the latticework ²¹ Hiram set the pillars at the entrance of the Temple, one toward the south and one toward the north. He named the one on the south Jakin, and the one on the north Boaz."

Now Jakin means he will establish, Boaz means in strength.

Hiram handcrafts two columns, two capitals. These columns are three stories tall and it's hard to handcraft stuff on the ground, but try doing it at a height. It adds a degree of difficulty and it adds an element of danger. For the record it took Michael Angelo about four years to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He did so lying on his back on scaffolding and whew, his back ached, his feet swelled and did you know his eyesight was actually impaired because of working. He couldn't read for several months after painting that ceiling. Now I am not putting the pillars that Hiram built on par with the Sistine Chapel, but Hiram did do what he did about 2,500 years before the renaissance. This is hard work, this is dangerous work, but there's one more detail that I think is easy to overlook. Hiram painstakingly handcrafts 200 pomegranates on top of these columns. And my question is why, because no one is going to see them and that's the point.

Now Second Timothy 3:16 says, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*" I think that includes little nuances like this one. I think this is here for a reason. Who cares what the top of the columns look like? I'm going to tell you who, the true artist and the artist, the all seeing eye, he's the only one who's gonna see

it. The last time I checked, this wasn't just Solomon's Temple. Solomon was building it for God and when you're building something for God, you don't really care about what people think because their opinion isn't the thing that matters at the end of the day. What really matters is what God thinks it's doing what we do for an audience of one; it's living for the applause of nail, scarred hands. It's making the most of the time, talent and treasure God has given you. It's recognizing that potential is a gift from God to you and what you do with it is your gift back to God. And I might add designing 200 pomegranates on top of a 27 foot column is Beamesque. It's unexpected excellence and that's what I want to talk about.

Going to share three thoughts this weekend, not too complicated. One to juxtapose this Old Testament narrative with a New Testament verse Romans chapter 12 and you know, let's just start at verse one for context. It says,

"In view of God's mercies, make a decisive dedication of your bodies to God as a living sacrifice - this is your spiritual act of worship."

Now listen, we don't do what we do to earn the grace of God. By definition, it cannot be earned. In fact, it has to be undeserved for it to qualify. Grace is a gift. We do what we do, not to earn God's grace, but in view of God's mercies. That's the backdrop that inspires us, and so we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, the Amplified Version says all your members, all your faculties. Now the problem with the living sacrifices that old theologian said is that it can crawl off at the altar, right? And so this is something we've got to do over and over again.

Verse eight Paul is talking about spiritual gifts, but I want to focus on the adverbs. It says,

"If your gift is giving, give generously. If it is leadership, lead diligently. If it is showing mercy, do it cheerfully, diligently, cheerfully, generously."

Let me kind of break this down a little bit. The Greek word for generously *eumetádotos*. It means going the extra mile, giving the extra effort, I think is above and beyond the call of duty. And for our purposes, let's just call it an A for effort. Greek word for diligently *spoudaiós*, it means earnestly or eagerly, it's an eye for excellence. It's attention to detail. It's doing what you do like your life depends on it. Let's just call it an A for excellence. And then the Greek word for cheerfully *hilarotēti* it means readily or willingly. It's a good to versus a have to mindset. I think it's whistling while you work. I think it's smiling while you serve and it might even be saying, my pleasure after you get that Chick-fil-A sandwich. All right, we'll call it an A for attitude.

That's what I want to talk about. 'Cause you know what? It is not about accolades. It's about excellence. It's not about outcomes. It's about giving God everything you've got. It's not about the atmosphere around you. It's bringing your A game attitude to the table. Sometimes it's doing a really good job for a really bad boss. Why? Because the last time I checked, I think we answer to a higher authority.

Let me unpack these three. We'll start with an A for excellence. Before filming *Ratatouille*, the Pixar team took a little trip to France. Why not? They spent two weeks dining in Michelin starred restaurants, visiting kitchens, interviewing chefs. They even went into some Parisian sewers to

see how Parisian rats live. Before animating up, oh, I love that movie, they went to Venezuela to see, Tepui up close and personal. It's the tabletop mountain that Paradise Falls is modeled after. They also brought an ostrich into Pixars headquarters to help the animators who were trying to model the movements of Kevin, the giant tropical bird. So question, how many of you have ever been to Tepui to see those hands or lacked there of? How many of you have ever been in the kitchen of a Michelin starred restaurant in France? I'm sure one, we have one. I love it. So here's the deal. Only one person would know the difference. Okay. You be why? 'cause you have no idea. But they are so dedicated to their craft of creating art that reflects reality that they do their research. We're going to get it right. When they came up with the plot line for finding Nemo and Nemo escaping the dentist aquarium, you remember this? Well they, they visited this San Francisco sewage treatment plant and discovered that it is in fact possible. So the movies true. I mean some of the crew, some of the Pixar folks even got scuba certified during the making of the movie so that the underwater perspective would be spot on. Now when the Pixar team goes on these fact-finding trips, their reconnaissance missions, they don't know what they're looking for. Ed Catmull co-founder, Pixar says, you'll never stumble upon the unexpected if you stick only to the familiar. And he asks a question, does this kind of micro detail matter? I believe it does. He says, no detail is too small. Now what does that have to do with anything?

Well, did you know that 12 chapters of the book of Exodus are devoted to the aesthetics of the Tabernacle, right down to the color of the curtains, down to a recipe for an incense that would stamp the olfactory nerve and create memory with those moments that they had worshipping God? Don't tell me this stuff isn't important. God's the one who designed us this way and so is it any wonder that Solomon would choose Hiram for the job? What am I talking about? Well, check this out, Second Chronicles comes along and says, not only was he skilled in gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Wait, there's more. He was skilled in purple, crimson, and blue colors. What is happening here? I mean, this is just like a little tip of the cap to all of our interior designers, right? This is serious business. Now, I'm not sure what you do for a living, but I do believe that excellence honors God and I'm going to give you a simple definition. It's doing the best you can with what you have, where you are. And guess what? You can do that anywhere.

By the way, oh, I love this, and I quote it all the time. Dorothy Sayers said, "I dare say no crooked table legs or ill fitted drawers ever came out of the carpenter's shop in Nazareth." I mean, who do you think Joseph told Jesus stories about growing up as they made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and saw this very temple? My hunches as a craftsmen, as a carpenter, probably told them a few stories about Hiram and said, hey son, look up at the top of those columns, that's what excellence looks like.

This series is not about getting the job everybody wants. In fact, it might be doing the job no one wants, but doing it in the words of Romans 12 diligently, cheerfully, and generously. It's about being faithful and fruitful, right where you're planted. It's doing the best you can with what you have, where you are. Dr. King may have said it best; "If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music ... Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well." I promise you, if you do little things like they're big things, God has a way of doing big things like they're little things. But I think it starts with getting an A for excellence. Ah, careful, careful,

careful not perfectionism, not obsessive compulsive, just making the most of what God has entrusted to you in a way that honors God. Now, hope we get in A for excellence, but let's also go after an A for attitude.

Once upon a time there were three brick layers. You've heard this. When asked what they were doing, first bricklayer said, I'm laying bricks. Second brick layer said, I am building a wall. Third brick layer said, I am constructing a cathedral for God. All of them are right, right? But only one of them had this perspective about what they were doing and that they were doing it, in fact, not as unto men, but unto God. And I think this is Hiram in a nutshell.

Now I try to remind our staff often that we may have hired you, but God's the one who called you. And so you may have a direct report on an org chart and that's significant, but at the end of the day ultimately I am accountable to God for the time, talent, and treasure he has entrusted to me. So whatever you do, Colossians 3:23 *"work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for man."* If you do what you do for extrinsic motivations, things like fame or fortune, I feel sorry for you because it's a mirage, you never get there. You'll never arrive. In fact, I might even say if you live off compliments, you're probably going to die by criticisms. Unsung heroes do what they do for intrinsic reasons.

Pablo Casals considered to be one of the greatest cellist ever to draw the bow, played for Queen Victoria when he was 22 played, for President Kennedy when he was 86. Casals lived to the age of 96 and he was still practicing three hours a day. I think someone asked them the natural question, why? He said, I'm beginning to notice improvement. That's intrinsic motivation. You gotta do what you do for an audience of one. You got to do what you do for the right reasons. Listen in the Kingdom of God if you do it for the wrong reason, doesn't even count. I think its Proverbs 16:2 that talks about how God measures the motives of the heart. Why do you do what you do and who are you doing it for?

I love Johann Sebastian Bach used to scribble three letters at the end of his oratorios and Handel did the same thing. SDG stood for the Latin phrase, Soli Deo Gloria to the glory of God alone. I kind of like this, I screened the Tom Hanks film that comes out in November, a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood, and I love what his widow, Joanna says about her husband, Fred. She said that he viewed the space between the television set and the person watching as holy ground. And you watch that and you can see it, can't you? You can even feel it. So the question is what's your holy ground? You know, I hope you know, I do not write for royalties. I write for one reason. I'm called to write. So what I do is when I'm in a writing season, I take off my shoes. Can I tell you why? It's holy ground and it's my acknowledgement. I can't do this. It's not a natural gifting, but I know that God's called me to do it. It's holy ground for me. And so you know what? I'm going to use the 26 letters of the English alphabet to worship God with a keyboard. I don't know what you do from sweeping streets to building columns but let's do it for the glory of God. I think we have time for one more, A for excellence, A for attitude.

How about an A for effort? Now I've shared this before I think it's worth sharing again, Will Smith, one of Hollywood's most accomplished actors. He once said, I never really viewed myself as particularly talented where I excel is a ridiculous, sickening work ethic. Then he shares his not so secret secret to success. He says, I'm not afraid to die on a treadmill. I will not be outworked.

You may be more talented than me. You might be smarter than me and you may be better looking than me, but if we get on a treadmill together, you're going to get off first or I'm gonna die.

Thomas Edison said genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. We have a core value. Remember, pray like it depends on God. Got to do that. Prayer is the difference between the best you can do and the best God can do. But there's another side to that coin. You also have to work like it depends on you. I think it honors God. I think its loving God with all of your strength, that's one quarter of the great commandment. It's caloric, you can measure it. Are you giving God blood, sweat and tears? Now, part of me, now wants to preach a whole 'nother sermon on Sabbath because I think in many ways our bigger problem perhaps in the city where we live is getting off the treadmill and not working for rest but working from rest. And I'd be the first to admit it's not easy. And so there's a balance in here, but I do believe that God deserves our very best effort.

Now on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus advocated going the extra mile said if someone makes you go one mile, go the extra mile. And guess what? There is no rush hour traffic on the extra mile. It's almost empty. Hardly anyone ever goes there. And so if you want to be an unsung hero, just go that extra mile and see what God does. Now that usually means going out of your way but the last time I checked, I think doing the will of God often looks a lot like inconvenience. And most of us are willing to follow Jesus to the point of inconvenience. But don't ask me to cross the street and help someone 'cause I'm on the way to the temple to worship. That was the priest and the Levite, but it was the Good Samaritan, the unsung hero who went the extra mile and made a difference.

So how are you doing? How are you doing? Excellence, attitude, effort. If you're doing a little self grading, how are we doing? And maybe where do we need God to help us? Perhaps up our game just a little bit. Let me try to see if we can bring this thing in for a landing. Who, who are the unsung heroes at NCC? You know what? It's those who invest their time, talent and treasure week in and week out. You lead groups, some of you multiple nights a week. You mentor Freshmen of the City, you help people walk through very difficult questions in Alpha and then about 200 other groups right? You set your alarm very early on a Sunday morning. It takes about 500 volunteers to pull off a weekend at National Community Church. I think we have got, I think we have about 150 people on our worship teams across the table. That's a quantum effort. I think we've got about 600 kids now, that's a lot of little kids running around. And you know, we have certain ratios that we try to hit 'cause we want to disciple those kids. And so listen, it takes a lot of effort to pull off a weekend at NCC. And I want to first of all say thank you. Thank you. And I also want to say if you're not serving yet, it's so fun. I'm not saying that there aren't some mornings that you feel like hitting the snooze button, but you know what, it's like going to the gym like you often don't feel like going but man, you always feel better having worked out. And so in the very same sense, we just don't want you to miss out on the joy of serving other people. And so I'll just give you a little website. In fact, you can take a picture, jot this down. It's real simple ncc.re/team And so if you want to serve or just ask a question or kind of take a first step, so many opportunities as we enter into the fall season. I might just say one more thing. Would you like one of these t-shirts? You can't buy one. You can only volunteer one. And so stay tuned, all of our campus, there's a tee shirt coming your way soon.

All right. All right. Let me invite our worship teams, all of our campuses to come and this kind of fun. Last weekend we closed by singing a song that's 800 years old, right? All Creatures Of Our God And King hymn that dates to 1919 but actually a poem written by Saint Francis of Assisi in 1225. And this weekend we're going to sing a song that's about eight days old, okay. I don't even know if you know this, but we are blessed with such an amazing worship team, worship leaders, and much of the music that we sing, they wrote. And this is one of those songs. It's titled Hope of Glory. And by the way, going to record our next album right towards the beginning of 2020. You'll be invited to that. I think it's going to be a wonderful experience, but I love these lyrics. Temporary seasons, giving birth to meaning. Oh, that's good. And ordinary stories making way for glory. Come on somebody. And so this weekend why don't we stand at all of our campuses as we give God the worship that he deserves. Here we go.