



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

May 14, 2017

# Great Works

Ed Sutter

# **Great Works**

Ed Sutter

© 2017 by Ed Sutter and Westminster Presbyterian Church.

All rights reserved.

No part of this sermon may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the author.

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: May 19, 2017

Psalm 78:1-4, John 14:1-12

Happy Mother's Day to all of the mothers-to-be, mothers and grandmothers with us here this morning. I was thinking about Mother's Day when I read this passage from John, which led me toward seeing it from a generational viewpoint. Not generational in the sense that one generation precedes the generation of their children, but in the sense that this faith that we celebrate has been grown and fostered in us by those that we share life with. Our faith and life are developed as they are touched by the lives around us.

Of course this story can't exclude mothers. Mothers shape and encourage their children in all sorts of ways, one of which, and I'm guessing it's a common story among many of us here today, is that mothers encourage us to explore our place in a church community. But it's not just mothers that have played a role in handing off the torch of faith, is it? More generally, and perhaps more completely, we receive different parts of our faith from different people.

In my mind, when Romans 12 speaks of the measure of faith given to us by God, we simply can't ignore the people in our lives that have helped to develop that faith. For each of us, there are people in our lives that have lived out God's calling to take part in shaping our faith. And if this is true, it also means that you and I have the joy and responsibility of taking part in the development of the faith of others. We can allow Jesus to live through us as we live face-to-face with our family and friends. I think this plays out in a few ways. I'm sure there are many others, but I want to talk about three this morning. We can help develop the faith of others as instructors, as companions and as encouragers.

Let's begin with instructors. Instructors are those of us that have something to give that others may need to receive. In this sense, each of us is an instructor in some capacity. Though the topic may vary, instructors are those that have traveled further or explored more deeply into their subject matter.

Parents spend much of their lives as instructors. And this doesn't mean that parents have mastered the art of life, nor does it mean that their desires are impervious to fatigue, loneliness, selfishness or doubt; but it does mean that, simply by their location on the road of life, parents have wisdom to offer their children. We all have instructors in our faith as well. Perhaps there's an author whose words seem to articulate answers to each of your questions or maybe there's a mentor or leader whose presence always seems to calm your doubt.

To whom are you called to be an instructor; perhaps a coworker who could use a prayer, a friend in a hard time of life, maybe a child or spouse that's simply worn down after a long, hard day. Who can you offer hope and life to?

There are also companions in our lives; those that walk along our side in the midst of each day's troubles and triumphs. Friends often act as faith companions. In my mind, the thing that separates companions from instructors is a companion's ability to offer hope even in the midst of shared doubt. We're often troubled when instructors and leaders share our doubts, but are comforted when companions see the world through similar eyes. Companions encourage us to ask questions, companions are right by our side at the darkest moments, companions tend to live life in the same emotional neighborhood that we do. How can you be a

companion today? Whose faith would be strengthened simply by your coming alongside them?

And then there are encouragers. If you have an encourager in your life, he or she is likely one of your absolute favorite people. Encouragers are the people that find more joy in your success than they do in their own. I ran in the Pittsburgh Marathon last weekend, and at any race that I've been a part of lots of people wear gear and clothing from other races like a badge of honor; it feels good to show off your accomplishments. A few miles into the course along the sidewalk there was a woman wearing a shirt that said "Just here to cheer." That's the encourager's mentality. "It doesn't matter what I've done, I'm here for you."

Every one of us, especially parents, has the chance to be encouragers. And I think this is particularly true for mothers. More than any other group that I can think of, mothers are capable of setting aside their own needs for the health, happiness and success of their children and family. Who can you encourage this week?

There is an important note that must be mentioned here: I firmly believe that each of us is gifted to embody the role of instructor, companion and encourager – but we can rarely, if ever, be all three at once. I say this because I don't want anyone to feel as though they must carry the burden of having to walk ahead of, alongside and behind someone all at once. You don't have to do the whole thing; our faith is grown and fostered over time and through countless relationships.

Even Jesus in the verses we read this morning says, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the father who dwells in me does his work."

“And just a few chapters later Jesus proclaims that it is good that he goes, for when he goes he sends his advocate the Holy Spirit to work in and through us, and it is through the gifts of the spirit that we each have just what we need to pass the torch of faith to others in our lives. Do you see the generational nature of this relationship? From Father to Son to Holy Spirit, into and through each of us, and out to the lives of others.

Jesus says that those that come after him will do great works, so whether you find yourself as an instructor, a companion or an encourager, take heart that you have been given authority to bless the faith of others around you and in doing so, perform great works in their lives.

And remember that you’re not alone; you are a part of a family of faith stretches beyond the limits of time. So as we celebrate the mothers in our lives today, let us also celebrate our place in that family, and those that have helped to shape and grow our faith.



**WESTMINSTER**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2040 Washington Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15241  
412-835-6630

[www.westminster-church.org](http://www.westminster-church.org)