

“A Life More Ordinary”

Don Brackbill, Jr.

December 3, 2014

*Pippin*, the play, was profound...  
Sitting during most of it, I found myself confused  
I didn't follow quite what was happening;  
I didn't understand all of the events unfolding  
But one thing I did know...  
*Pippin*, the character, had many a vision  
Visions of greatness, visions of uniqueness  
A quest that consumed his attention.

At first he contemplated becoming a man of war,  
Engaging in battle,  
Defeating those on the field,  
Experiencing conquest over the foes.  
He imagined being a fighting man  
One who would inspire fear  
Inspiration and awe in the eyes of others.

When becoming that man of war proved disappointing  
He quickly turned to a life of hedonism – pursuing pleasure.  
He sought out women to be with  
He pursued pleasure at all cost  
He filled himself with food and drink  
He surrounded himself with “fun”.  
He wanted to find satisfaction to his drive  
And tried different ways to find fulfillment.

However, fulfillment was elusive and he sought something else;  
He turned to thoughts of power and influence  
He wanted to become King.  
He did everything he could to usurp power  
He wanted to make the decisions that control others  
He desired to exercise strength of will, determination of spirit  
He wanted to demonstrate that he was in charge  
Until he made a mess of things.

*Pippin*, in everything, longed for the extraordinary  
He thought that he was destined for greatness  
He wanted to be remembered, to experience glory

And at every turn,  
With every decision,  
In every direction he looked,  
He found illusion and disappointment.

He came (only in the 2<sup>nd</sup> act) to an ordinary life  
He found an ordinary woman  
He found an ordinary boy  
He engaged in ordinary chores  
He realized the ordinary activities  
And his own limitations  
(he couldn't even heal a duck!)

He was presented with the ultimate choice...  
He could end his life in an extraordinary way  
Or he could choose a different path  
He could embrace the ordinary life.

The choice could not be more stark:  
The imagined glamor of life would be stripped away  
(no more costumes would adorn his body)  
The longed for spotlight would fade into darkness  
(the eyes of others would turn away)  
The hoped for fame would dissipate  
(and crowds would no longer gather)  
The delusional beauty of life would disappear  
(as the beauty of the woman and the boy were taken)  
The dream-like magic that filled his life would vanish  
(and the miraculous possibilities they represented)  
The fantasy of invincibility would slip from his mind  
(and the acrobatic, crowd-pleasing great feats would be gone)

He was confronted by the circus of his mind  
The dreams of greatness danced before him  
The fantasy of pleasure paraded in his eyes  
The fascinations of power filled his heart  
The imagery of uniqueness consumed his attention  
The illusion of significance occupied his focus  
The excitement of the stupendous competed for his passion.

But in the end, what did Pippin see?  
He saw greatness that really wasn't so great;  
He perceived strength that was revealed as weakness;  
He understood glory was only a mask for vanity;

He observed that fame merely covered insecurity;  
He noticed that power is recognized as impotency;  
He sensed that pleased promised only futility and unfulfillment.

So Pippin chose –

He chose to abandon his quest to be extraordinary  
He found peace in an ordinary life.

He found pleasure with the woman who loved him.  
He found significance in the eyes of the boy who looked up to him.  
He found satisfaction in the toil of his days.  
He found hope in the path and the course of the regular days.  
He found contentedness in the experience of the ordinary

He found what he was looking for  
Among the non-extraordinary;  
Among the mundane;  
Among the usual;  
Among the “normal”  
Among the ordinary.

And when he made that decision  
The circus of torment in his mind ceased.  
He walked away in peace (of mind and of heart)  
He found his peace in the ordinary.

In watching the unfolding drama,  
Witnessing Pippin’s quest for greatness  
I was uncomfortable and uneasy  
And not for the reasons that I had thought.

I was troubled and disquieted...  
Because I have wanted greatness.  
I’ve longed for influence and power;  
I’ve desired respect and prestige;  
I’ve dreamt of impact and significance;  
I’ve hoped for virility and pleasure;  
I’ve wanted to be extraordinary.  
An extraordinary Pastor...  
An extraordinary Man...  
An extraordinary Preacher...  
An extraordinary Person of Influence....  
An extraordinary Husband...  
An extraordinary Father...

An extraordinary "Anything".

And in my quest and pursuit of the extraordinary  
I've missed exactly what Pippin had missed.  
The lesson he learned in the unfolding acts,  
Is the lesson I am learning in the unfolding of life.  
The lesson, the choice before me,  
I saw played out on that stage:

I can die in a fit of glory –  
Unfulfilled, unsatisfied, unhappy and unaware.  
Or I can live in the midst of the ordinary –  
And experience fulfillment;  
And know satisfaction;  
And encounter happiness,  
And practice self-awareness.

The choice is mine –  
An unfulfilled quest of the extraordinary  
Or a satisfaction in life among the ordinary.

In the words of the Apostle Paul,  
"For I have learned  
In whatever situation I am  
To be content."

What I need is Life More Ordinary!