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WHAT IS "GREATNESS"?

Hello. I'm Landon Saunders. And this is Heartbeat.

Jay didn't want to be great—like being President or something. He just wanted his own life to have a sense of importance. He just wanted to feel that somehow his life counted for something. He just wanted to feel like he was worth something.

And to feel that you count, that you're worth something to someone is a good feeling. On the other hand to feel worthless, well, that's something else.

But, the problem is, how does a man count in an age like ours? How can you even know—when you do count—and when you don't? Our ideas of greatness seem to be so mixed up. You're bombarded by this term through mass media...and it means everything from toothpaste to maybe a press agents plug. It has become something that you can take or leave, believe or disbelieve... and maybe you've begun to think the yardstick that measures men and deeds is elastic—that it could be stretched and bent and shrunk from generation to generation and from person to person, till it would fit whatever seemed fashionable, whatever was popular, who ever had gained the fame, wealth, notoriety, a place in the sun, a part of the lime-light.

When you're old, you think they don't make great men the way they used to. When you're young, and have fewer memories to worry about, the hero of another time and another place is seen with all his faults, exposed like tarnish and rust. Is real greatness simply a ghost-like memory in the past? Something that really never existed. Are great men reduced to the mustiness of library shelves or the make-believe world of plays and movies? Must we say farewell to greatness?

Is life just a play...a play that you watch but have no power over the way it begins or the way it ends? I don't believe life is confined to such limitations. I think we can live an imitation of life and become "poor players who strut and fret their hour upon the stage"—or we can become life in a meaningful way, grasping its depth and length and breadth and height. And, there in those deep dimensions of life, we begin to discover the meaning of true greatness.

I really appreciated the words of William Faulkner spoken as he accepted his Nobel Prize: "I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance."

You see if we look for greatness simply in power and ambition ...then, like Alexander—on top of it all-----world-master—but dead at 33 from acute alcoholism with only suffering, heart-ache and bloodshed in his wake, his followers disbanded, all their dreams of conquest and glory ultimately reduced to a few lines in history books where he is identified simply as "Alexander the Great."

Seems like history has been a record of men whose passion for power, whose obsession with their own greatness, have often brought civilization itself to the edge of darkness. Men whose greatness had a way of dying when they did. Men who when they got to the top found themselves standing in a pool of other men's blood.

On the other hand greatness could be found in another dimension.

The Teacher curiously—but profoundly—said that to be great we had to become like a little child. Have you recognized the beauty of a little child? What are its qualities of greatness? Think of the eyes for a moment. The eyes of a little child aren't afraid to look into your eyes; they are willing to be vulnerable, to be exposed. They are not trying to take; they are willing to give. Those who are willing to be vulnerable walk among mysteries, discover the true key to greatness. I would like to tell you more about the mystery of greatness, why not write to me, just write the word "GREAT" on a postcard and send it to me: Landon Saunders, Box 7 401, Chicago. This is Heartbeat.