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Adventure or Cautious Mediocrity?

by [Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.](#)



Peter. Paul. Isaiah. Frodo Baggins. They have more in common than meets the eye.



Of course there are differences, too. Peter is a small business man, trying to wring a living for his family out of a lake in Hicksville. No one expected much from Galilee. Its inhabitants had a thick country accent that gave them away every time, like when Peter denied Christ in the high priest's courtyard (Mat 26:73). Saul, on the other hand, was cosmopolitan, highly educated, well traveled, and even a Roman citizen. Isaiah lived seven centuries before them, in a very different social context. Frodo Baggins lived in

Middle Earth, which is to say, in the imagination of J.R.R. Tolkien, and now lives in the imaginations of millions.

But here's what they have in common. They were all minding their own business, intent on their own careers, when they were abruptly interrupted. They each had an encounter with something, Someone, much bigger than themselves, and were invited to embark upon a Great Adventure. The same vision was revealed to each of them. That behind the appearances of the humdrum of everyday life, there was a battle going on, a dramatic struggle with very high stakes. People were in bondage but D-day had come. The forces of salvation were on the move. And each of them, Peter, Paul, Isaiah, and Frodo, were called to enlist.

None of them would have been voted most likely to succeed. Isaiah thought he'd die. Peter felt so unworthy that he begged Christ to leave. Paul lamented the blood that was on his hands. Frodo staggered under the burden of his appointed task.



But they all said yes. And though they met hardship, withering resistance, and had to face the bitter disappointment of their own sin, they kept going. They left behind the familiarity of the lake, the synagogue, the shire, and embarked upon a Great Adventure. That Adventure brought them through suffering to everlasting glory and made them men that they never

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imagined they could be. Isaiah's words have been sung by innumerable choirs of men and angels over two thousand years of Masses. Peter's successor now reigns amidst the ruins of the empire that tormented the martyrs. And Frodo, the pint-sized Hobbit, completes his mission, despite his weakness, and brings down the power of the Dark Lord.

They all illustrate the words of Jesus that the last shall be first, that the least shall be greatest, that God chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Our hearts are warmed by the Gospel story. We applaud at the conclusion of the Lord of the Rings.

And then we go back to business as usual, never suspecting that we may be called, just as they were called. That the battle rages around us, as it did around them.



We are just like them. Imperfect. Unworthy. Busy with other things. The reality is that each one of us is called to the heights of sanctity, to become something beautiful and mighty for God. God has destined each one of us to change the course of history, to leave an everlasting mark on the destinies of countless people. There are different roles to be played, of course. Mary's role was different from Isaiah's, Magdalen's, Paul's, and Peter's. Frodo, Aragorn, Pippin, Sam – all had different though equally essential roles.

But most of us will prefer reading about others exploits rather than answering the call, staying in the Shire where it is comfortable, safe, predictable. The word "pagan" means non-combatant. "Christian," on the other hand, means anointed for combat. There really is no room for the spiritual coach potato in the Kingdom of God. Being a Christian is not about getting to heaven by the skin of your teeth after a life of cautious mediocrity. It's about an adventure that leads to glory, but only through perilous battles. You can choose to be safe if you want. But the thoughts of who you could have become and whose lives you might have saved will always be there to haunt you.

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