

### **The True Marks of Success**

A hundred years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson noted three qualities he deemed marks of true "success":

1. the ability to discern and appreciate beauty,
2. the ability to see the best in others,
3. and a commitment to leaving the world a better place.

Notice that Emerson does not say that success comes in having the best seat at the table, acquiring more material possessions, or in belonging to the best clubs. Emerson contends that success comes with appreciating God's world, developing loving relationships with God's people, and with working to improve God's world. Jesus would agree heartily.

In fact, our scripture lesson for today ends with a wonderful suggestion of how to work to make the world a better place. Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind to dinner. They are all members of your family. Just think how much richer your table talk will be if you don't just associate with your business associates and closest relatives. Remember around the table such wonderful things happen. Invite everyone to the table. They are all members of the extended family. (by R. Robert Cueni from *Sermons on the Gospel Readings, Series I, Cycle C*, CSS Publishing Company)

### **A Surprise Party**

It's like the story of a small lad whose mother, unknown to him, planned a surprise birthday party. After he got home, he went upstairs to his room. Then all his classmates and teachers gathered in the living room. When his mother went to his room to get him, he was gone. He had climbed down a tree outside his window and was hiding in a nearby park. The rest of the children went on to enjoy a good time, but Johnny never turned up. When he came in for supper his mother asked where he had been; he had missed a wonderful time, planned just for him. He tearfully confessed he had heard her call but hid until suppertime because he thought she had a chore for him to do!

How sad - for him and for us if we make the same mistake. There is a party being prepared. The guest list is all inclusive. No matter how many parties we have missed in this world, we don't have to miss out on this party. The One who throws this party is all loving, all gracious, all generous. We are invited even though there is nothing in this world we can do to repay our host. All that is asked is that we accept the invitation. (by Eric S. Ritz from *The Ritz Collection*, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com))

### **Peer Pressure**

Chuck Swindoll tells about a study of teenagers and peer pressure. The design of the study was simple. They brought groups of ten adolescents into a room for a test. Each group was instructed to raise their hands when the teacher pointed to the longest line on three separate charts. What one person in the groups of ten did not know was that the other nine had been instructed ahead of time to vote not for the longest line, but for the second-longest line.

Do you get the picture? Regardless of the instructions they heard, once they were all together in the group, the nine were not to vote for the longest line, but rather vote for the next to the longest line. This left the tenth student being the only one who would be voting for the longest line. Guess what happened. Time after time, this tenth student would glance around, frown in confusion at the way the others were voting, and slip his hand up with the group. The instructions were repeated and the next card was raised.

Each time, the self-conscious stooge would sit there saying a short line is longer than a long line, simply because he lacked the courage to challenge the group. This remarkable conformity occurred in about 75% of the cases, and was true of small children and high-school students as well.

It's hard to say no to the crowd. And becoming an adult doesn't make it much easier.

You may know the story of the woman who was interviewed by reporters on her 102nd birthday. When asked what was the best thing about passing the century mark, she answered, "No peer pressure!" (by King Duncan from *Collected Sermons*, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com))

### **Success that Counts**

Mother Teresa was once asked, "How do you measure the success of your work?" She thought about the question and gave her interviewer a puzzled look, and said, "I don't remember that the Lord ever spoke of success. He spoke only of faithfulness in love. This is the only success that really counts." (by Brett Blair from [www.eSermons.com](http://www.eSermons.com))