



THE MASTERPIECES AROUND US

(Children's Story/Parable)

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Just after the close of World War II, a man was browsing through a flea market in France. He came across a painting of a vase and flowers, and, though he couldn't make out the artist's signature, he liked it well enough to buy it and take it home. Without even bothering to frame the painting, however, the man put it in his attic, where it stayed for decades.

Finally, in 1993, when he took the painting to a connoisseur in Zurich, it turned out to be a Vincent van Gogh original that had been previously unknown. The following year, "Still Life (Vase With Flowers)" went on display at Amsterdam's Vincent van Gogh Museum.

The prophet Samuel was sent by God to the house of Jesse to select the next king of Israel. Samuel did no more than set eyes on Jesse's eldest son, Eliab, before he burst out, "'Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord'" (1 Sam. 16:6, NIV).

Wrong!

God had other plans, could see hidden strengths and skills in Jesse's very youngest son. From Samuel's human viewpoint, Eliab appeared to be the obvious choice, but as it turned out, he wasn't the best candidate for the job.

Jesus was an absolute master at seeing the value in people when others around them completely missed it. His twelve disciples were the oddest assortment of hotheads, schemers, and losers that you could imagine. In fact, the one that seemed likeliest to succeed—Judas—turned out to be the only disappointing counterfeit. The rest were unframed masterpieces.

If we are to be like Christ, maybe we'd do well to spend a little time working on our abilities to recognize worth in others, especially those who may be completely overlooked and unappreciated. And this would include even people with special needs. Everyone is gifted by God in some unique way. We may not always recognize God's signature on the person next to us at school or at work, but we can always be watching for ways to help others realize their potential.