

Ordinary 16 B - 2021

Hurry Hinders Ministry

An ethics professor at Princeton Seminary asked for volunteers for an extra assignment. About half the class met him at the library to receive their assignments. The professor divided the students into three groups of five each.

He gave the first group envelopes telling them to proceed immediately across campus to Stewart Hall. He told them that they had 15 minutes and if they didn't arrive on time, it would affect their grade.

A minute or two later, he handed out envelopes to five others. They were also to go over to Stewart Hall, but they had 45 minutes.

The third group had three hours to get to Stewart Hall.

The students weren't aware of it, but the professor had arranged for three drama students to meet them along the way.

Close to the beginning of their walk, one of the drama students had his hands on his head and was moaning aloud as if in great pain.

About half way to Stewart Hall, on the steps of the chapel, the seminary students passed a man who was lying face down as if unconscious.

Finally, on the steps of Stewart Hall, the third drama student was acting out a seizure.

In the first group of students, those who had only 15 minutes to get across campus, no one stopped to help.

In the second group, two students stopped to help.

In the last group, the one that had three hours for their assignment, all of the students stopped to help at least one person. The professor had clearly shown these seminarians that hurry hinders ministry.

The disciples have been out on their own preaching, driving out demons, and anointing and healing the sick. When they return they gather around Jesus and report in. They had

done good work and they must have been excited about the new authority they held in the name of Jesus. Jesus must have been excited to see his apostles too; he wanted to hear about their experiences, so he invites them to come aside. "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while," Jesus said. What is Jesus trying to get across to his disciples? He is trying to tell them and tell you and me that:

1. We need to take time to be present to one another
2. Saving time is not making time
3. Let God give you time

Feeling the Suffering of Others

Flannery O'Connor, the insightful Roman Catholic writer, lifted up the Christian dimension when she wrote: "You will have found Christ when you are concerned with other people's sufferings and not your own." The beginning of compassion involves becoming aware of the suffering of others. But it is not enough simply to see the suffering of others, we need to feel it. It is possible to see suffering, but not to feel it.

Dewitt Jones tells about a photographer who walked down the street one day and came upon a man who was choking. "What a picture," he thought. "This says it all: A man, alone, in need. What a message!" He fumbled for his camera and light meter until the poor fellow who was choking realized that help was not forthcoming. He grabbed the photographer's arm and gasped, "I'm turning blue!"

"That's all right," said the photographer, patting the fellow's hand, "I'm shooting color film." Just noticing suffering isn't enough. (David G. Rogne, Sermons for Sundays after Pentecost, CSS Publishing Company)

Rest

One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had. "I don't get it," he said.

"Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did."

"But you didn't notice," said the winning woodsman, "that I was sharpening my ax when I sat down to rest."