

It's Time to Move On!



The great architect Frank Lloyd Wright was fond of an incident that may have seemed insignificant at the time, but had a profound influence on the rest of his life. The winter he was 9, he went walking across a snow-covered field with his reserved, no-nonsense uncle. As the two of them reached the far end of the field, his uncle stopped him. He pointed out his own tracks in the snow, straight and true as an arrow's flight, and then young Frank's tracks meandering all over the field. "Notice how your tracks wander aimlessly from the fence to the cattle to the woods and back again," his uncle said. "And see how my tracks aim directly to my goal. There is an important lesson in that."

Years later the world-famous architect liked to tell how the experience had contributed to his philosophy in life. "I determined right then," he'd say with a twinkle in his eye, "not to miss the things in life, that my uncle had missed." Frank Lloyd Wright saw in those tracks what his uncle could not:

It is easy to let the demands of life keep us from the joys of living. We all recognize that any goal in life worth achieving, demands a great deal of our energy. If you are a doctor you must spend vast hours alone and in residency studying the human body. The life of your patient demands it. If you are a teacher you must live in the library researching and preparing for your lecture. The mind of your student demands it. If you are a carpenter you must patiently measure the building before you drive the first nail. The integrity of the structure depends on it. If you are a parent you must sacrifice your life for another. Your children require it. We could not live if we did not set goals and work to fulfill them. No sane person would argue otherwise. But here's what young Wright discovered at the tender age of 9, and what some don't learn until 59: The objective in life is not the goal but the journey on the way to the goal.

The whole city had gathered around the door, pressing in to see Jesus. The demands on him were already piling up. He cured many, cast out demons, and taught constantly. And his disciples didn't help matters. When he left in the morning early to pray, they went searching for him. And when they found him they said, "What are you doing, everyone is searching for you?"

How do we enjoy the journey when everyone and everything is searching for you, wanting a piece of you, and demanding your time? First, remember that hard work is required. We all have to work. We work at our jobs; we work at home; we do homework; we even work on our marriages. Any of you have grandparents who are fond of reminding you about a strong work ethic? *Good, better, best. Never let it rest. Until your good is better, and your better is best?*

That's what I see when I look at Jesus in this passage. Look at what kind of day he has: First, Jesus is just getting started on the job. It's the beginning of his ministry.

Mark tells us that after one of his first sermons he is thrown into the thick of it. They leave the synagogue and immediately he is confronted with the sickness of Peter's mother-in-law. She has a fever and he heals her. He takes her by the hand and helps her up. The fever leaves her and what does she do? She goes to work. She waits on Peter, James, John, Simon, Andrew, and Jesus. The other disciples are probably there as well. You would think Jesus would have said, you lay still until you get your strength back. After the sun sets all the people in this small town bring their sick and demon possessed. The whole town is gathered at the door and they are healed. Nothing more is said here of Peter's mother-in-law but I am sure she could not have imagined after starting her day with a deadly fever, that she would end up entertaining 12 disciples and their rabbi, then ending the day with the town descending on her home. At some point that evening they all finally get some sleep.

But instead of sleeping-in Jesus gets up before dawn and leaves the house to pray. Then Simon and company go looking for him. When they find him in solitude and prayer, Simon blurts out at Jesus, *everyone is searching for you*. Jesus could have said any number of things at this point, but what he says is surprising. Instead of trying to get across the obvious, that he is trying to have a moment alone, all to himself with God, he says, *you're right, Simon. You're right; let's go to the next town so we get started there. It's time to move on.*

In Africa every morning when the sun comes up, a gazelle wakes. He knows that he must outrun the fastest lion or he will be eaten. When the sun comes up, the lion wakes. He knows that he must outrun the slowest gazelle, or he will starve. In the end it doesn't matter whether you are a lion or gazelle; when the sun comes up, you better be running.

Let us go somewhere else so I can preach. Let us leave this solitude and go to work, *that is why I have come*. Jesus understood the charge he had to keep and he set about doing it. Perhaps he didn't get the time he needed for solitude but then neither do we.

How do we work hard and keep it from killing us? I think the obvious answer is to take some time off and some time away from the work. This is obvious and I hope you do take vacations. There is, however, other ways of combating fatigue. Look at this very short and subtle exchange between Simon Peter and Jesus.

Simon has just come from his mother-in-law's home and he says to Jesus, *Jesus, everyone is searching for you!* It sounds like Simon is pretty excited about something and is chastising

Jesus for slipping away. Now, my question is this: Who is searching for Jesus? The other disciples? The sick he has healed? His mother-in-law? Yes, I think they are all searching for him but there is a little more here. I believe what happened was, when the sun came up, the town descended upon this poor woman's house again. The word had spread and the world was at the door of this poor woman's house and these disciples had no idea what to do with them. So Simon runs to find Jesus.

Look closely at Jesus' response: *Let us go somewhere else.* Somewhere else? Somewhere else? I can hear Simon stammering: What about ... There are sick people... What do I tell my mother-in-law...? *Somewhere else, Peter.*

Here is the surprise: Jesus did not feel that he had to respond to every need. It has seemed odd to me over the years that people imagine Jesus met every need. When Jesus was in Capernaum, he was not in Bethsaida! People in Bethsaida could have been healed. When he was in the wilderness, people back in town were suffering. Jesus didn't even meet the needs of one percent of the people in Palestine during his three years. Why? It wasn't his goal. But Simon thought it was. At least at this moment, Simon thought it should be the goal.

Last week I saw an image of Barak Obama on the day of his inauguration. You may have seen in too. What captured my attention was the crowds- and the clamoring of the people all around him. But just before he went out to be in front of the crowds, he stopped at the threshold, surrounded by security and media and politicians, he stood in silence, eyes closed, as if praying, surely gathering his thoughts and his spiritual resources one final time before the great moment. I believe he was trying to focus himself on the work in front of him rather than getting caught up in the hype created by the crowds.

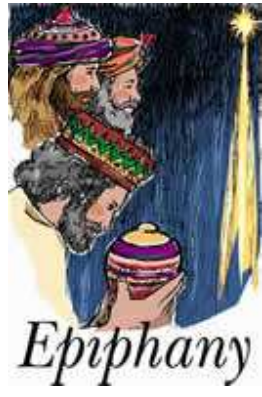
In his inauguration speech President Obama challenged the people with words from scripture – to dream new dreams, to see new visions, and to put aside childish ways, saying, **it's time to move on!**

For more than a year this congregation has been involved in an extended time out, reviewing where we have been and looking to where we can go.

Our committees have worked very diligently and very hard to help set a course for our church life here at Newtonbrook. And now we need to roll up our sleeves and work together to align our common life with the life of Jesus.

As followers, we are called to keep clear in our minds and hearts who it is we serve and for what purpose we involve ourselves in the church and its various institutional structures and activities.

We are Jesus' people. We are the Body of Christ. We have set our course of action so let's enjoy the journey for *it's time to move on!* Let those who have ears hear! Amen.



Rev. Dr. Ellen Redcliffe
Mark 1:29-39
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