

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. After reading this story, I stopped and thought about my ministry and how I often get as more and more stuff piles up. And I think that I may be somewhere around the 15 minute and the 45 minute groups. The busier I get, the more likely that I move around with blinders on. I am able to see just what is directly in my path and am focused on what I need to do next that don't really comprehend what is going on around me.

It can be so easy to get caught up in the business of the world that we miss opportunities for sharing God's love with others. Jesus knew the demands of ministry and he was able to handle those demands. But he knew that his disciples could not. As the ministry picked up, Jesus knew that his disciples would need to take time to rest.

That is why Jesus told them to come away and rest for a while. This advice is not just in reference of doing ministry but is also appropriate in all aspects of life. I have had a number of people talk to me over the years who are literally worn out from the demands of work, school or family. They get to a point that they do not know which way to turn. It is like they are their whit's end. They need rest.

Now that does not mean that we can checkout of taking care of things and just do what we want with the reasoning that we are taking care of ourselves because God did create us to be in relationship with one another. We are to live and work together in our daily lives as we proclaim the gospel.

In today's gospel, Jesus made a point in making sure the disciples knew that they were to rest and take care of their selves. We have the same message. Part of being a good disciple and embracing the mission that God has put before you is to take care of yourself.