

G&P

Why do some people see opportunities others miss? In the book *Did You Spot the Gorilla?* psychologist Richard Wiseman describes an experiment that provides a clue.

Volunteers watched a 30-second video of two teams playing basketball and were asked to count the number of times one of the teams passed the ball. What they weren't told was that halfway through the video, a man dressed in a gorilla's suit would run onto the court, stand in front of the camera, and beat his chest. Amazingly only a few of the volunteers spotted the man in the gorilla suit. Most of the volunteers were so intent on counting passes that they completely missed the gorilla.

Wiseman concluded that most people go through life so focused on the immediate task at hand they completely miss *gorilla* opportunities. He gives the example of a team of 3M researchers who were trying to develop a high-strength adhesive. One of their attempts produced a product that was actually the opposite—a very low-strength adhesive. Most of the team thought the result was a failure, but one saw it as an opportunity. That adhesive failure went on to become the invention that made 3M Post-It notes a reality.

If we aren't careful, we can be so fixated on the mundane, that we miss God-given opportunities of significance.

Richard J. Goodwin, Kaikohe, New Zealand; source: Richard Wiseman, *Did You Spot the Gorilla? How to Recognize Hidden Opportunities* (Arrow Books)

This gives us a clue as we look at the text for this morning. Jesus has laid everything to the side as he leads his disciples in ministry. He has left his mother and brothers and sisters, and his home town. He gathers a new family together in the 12 and in the men and women who follow him. He is tempted and swayed in so many ways as he journeys about in those three years. We have heard the tale of his temptation with Satan in the wilderness. We have seen how he would be tempted to set up a hospital so that he could cure all of their ailments. We have seen how they wanted to make him the King of Israel.

Surely, the temptation is there for Jesus. Who wants to be in conflict all of the time with those in authority? But Jesus has embraced the will of God in his life. He has embraced it to the point where it has become a part of his heart. Every morning he rises before dawn and he strengthens that will of God in his prayers so that he knows who he is and whose he is. When he heals, he does it not for his

glory, but for Gods and the strengthening of the new faith in the person. When he teaches, he does it not for his glory but that the hearers might come to believe in God's grace. When he challenges the powers as they are, he does it not to lift up his own intellect and power but to point to the ultimate creative power in the universe in God.

Whereas the Pharisees only see the Law and what they have to do in the Law, and the disciples only see the present and what it takes to survive, Jesus sees the whole picture of God's grace coming into the world. Jesus sees.

This is what we learn from Jesus this morning. For his heart is in the will of God and the will of God is for him to go to Jerusalem like the prophets of old. There was no other way for him. The text tells that Jesus 'must' go to Jerusalem. This literally means that Jesus so internalized the will of God in his life, that he has no choice here. It has already been made at the beginning of time. He is here to fulfill that will. So that salvation might come to all people through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus looks on Jerusalem, and really the whole of humanity and weeps for us. Like a mother hen who gathers her brood under her wings to protect and love them, he wants to do the same with us. He laments the condition of the world knowing that there is only one way to fix it. GO to Jerusalem and die for all, that all might have life in his name.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

With those words Jesus teaches us about keeping the right focus in our life, he teaches by example. He will not be moved from the longing to embrace all of humanity, even if it means to leave behind all and embrace the way of the cross.

Ronald Rolheiser, president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas:

We want to be a saint, but we also want to feel every sensation experienced by sinners; we want to be innocent and pure, but we also want to be experienced and taste all of life; we want to serve the poor and have a simple lifestyle, but we also want all the comforts of the rich; we want to have the depth afforded by solitude, but we also do not want to miss anything; we want to pray, but we also want to watch television, read, talk to friends, and go out.

It's a small wonder that life is often a trying enterprise, and that we are often tired and pathologically overextended.

—Ronald Rolheiser, president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas

Rolheiser is right, we live in two worlds. As followers of Jesus we want forgiveness and life, we want to be able to love one another, we want to make a difference in the world. Then we see the world and we fall into the world of distractions.

Tim Allen, star of the television sitcom "Home Improvement" said:

How much of the day are you awake? You think, *I gotta get the dry cleaning, I gotta get going, and this and this.* All of a sudden it's dinnertime. And then there is a moment of connection with your spouse or your friends. Then you read and go to bed. Wake up, and it's the same all over. You're not awake, you're not living, you're not experiencing. We start early medicating ourselves. We start kids early on TV and video games and so on. It's daunting how many possibilities there are in life for every one of us. But rather than face that I may be a failure or a success□I think both of them are terrifying□people find diversions.

"Self Improvement," Reader's Digest (October 2001), p. 86; submitted by Jeff Hinman, Independence, Oregon

We see this even in the disciples who have Jesus right there. Peter wants to build 3 booths up on the mountain of transfiguration when he cannot handle seeing Jesus all lit up in white with two prophets of old. We see James and John fighting over the best seat in the kingdom when Jesus is trying to teach them about God's grace.

We are pulled in many directions. Jesus teaches us to find our balance in the cross, with God at our center, all of our decisions be made with God at the center. A christian lives in the world this way. Jesus gives us his life so that we can die to all of the things that keep us from loving each other. That we can die to all of the mistakes that we make so that we can rise again in the grace of forgiveness.

The strongman at a circus squeezed the juice from a lemon between his hands. He then said to the audience, "I will offer \$200 to anyone in the audience who can squeeze another drop from this lemon.

A thin scholarly looking woman came forward, picked up the lemon, strained hard and managed to get a drop. The strongman was amazed. He paid the woman and asked, "What is the secret of your strength?"

"Practice," the woman answered. "I was the treasurer of a Lutheran Church for 32 years!"

With grace come perseverance and determination, and response to this love that Jesus gives to us in the heart of soul.

UFFOLK, VA—A group of former prisoners of war has been meeting every month for the past thirty years to have breakfast together. The group of soldiers who had been imprisoned in the Pacific during World War II includes a survivor of the Bataan Death March. For the past several years, an anonymous stranger has been picking up the tab. Recently, the group met him for the first time.

How did it begin? One morning William Blair, an asphalt contractor, arrived at the Suffolk, Virginia restaurant and was moved when he spotted several cars in the parking lot bearing POW license plates. Entering the restaurant, he spotted a large group of older men at a table and asked the restaurant owner about them. When the owner said that they were former prisoners of war, Blair decided to pick up their check, but asked to remain anonymous. The next month, he did same thing. Months stretched into years, with Blair continuing to pick up the tab. The group, which once numbered around twenty, has now dwindled to three or four, due to illness and death.

Blair explained that these men were his heroes and that he was happy to be able to do a little something for them, because Pacific POWs "have never been honored like European POWs." Blair, who was a child when World War II ended, was himself an Army veteran who had been stationed in Germany during the 1950's. Blair said he could not recall exactly how long he has been buying the group's breakfasts and never bothered to add up how much he spent over the years.

The elderly veterans were delighted to finally meet the mystery man. To thank their benefactor, they all lined up on the deck of the USS Bataan, raised a salute and presented Blair with an American flag that had been flown on the ship earlier in the week. "Mr. Blair, it's nice to finally meet you," said 84-year-old David Topping, who survived the Bataan Death March and was held prisoner by the Japanese for three years.

Although Blair would have preferred that his identity remain hidden, the mystery began to unravel a year ago when a waitress unwittingly let it slip. Since then, the group had been trying to meet him, and they finally succeeded. Blair intends to keep paying for the group's breakfasts. When asked whether he might start eating with the men, he smiled and said, "I probably will, now that I've been found out."

Like a mother hen who gathers her brood under her wings, Jesus has gathered us together, not only had paid out tab, but has given us the grace to live and share that love with others. Come to the

table this morning and receive the love of Jesus Christ for you, for life and love and forgiveness. Amen