

The Road Less Traveled - February 3, 2017

A friend called me a while back, worried that he was about to lose his job. When I answered the phone, I knew right away that something was wrong. His voice had a defeated tone to it. "What am I going to do?" was the refrain that he repeated throughout the conversation. There is the economic reality, of course. The loss of a job means uncertainty – Will he be able to pay his bills? Will he lose his house? Can he afford to keep his car? But there is a deeper issue as well. The loss of a job means the loss of identity and a rejection that cuts to the deepest core of who we are.

But in the midst of the conversation, my friend said something interesting. "I'm miserable," he said. "This job puts me under way too much stress. I can't even sleep at night because I'm worried about things at work." He has the job he has now because he continued to accept promotions in his chosen field. But faced with losing his job, he finally could admit that he hates his job. Somewhere along the way, the career that began as a calling became little more than a burden.

My friend is an extreme example of where many of us find ourselves. We get caught up in the hustle and bustle of life and all the demands that come with it. We accept promotions because they will bring us more income. We commit ourselves to any number of activities because they keep us busy. Our lives become full very quickly, and yet sometimes despite all the busyness, they can seem exceedingly empty. We can drag ourselves to activities trying to remember why we signed up in the first place. We find ourselves trapped in jobs that are miles away from that which drew us into our career way back when. And we can go through entire days feeling like we are stuck on a conveyor belt, with no control over where we are going.

Whatever is a Christian to do? I guess my friend turned to me. He called. We talked a bit. I'm sure we will talk about it some more. But it is telling that this man who I have known for years – who is not a person of serious faith, by the way – knew instinctively where to turn when he didn't know what else to do. He turned to me, but not really. He called me not because he needed to talk, but because he needed a favor. It took him a little while, but he finally asked for that which he needed the most.

"Would you pray for me?"

I can't help but wonder how much better off he (and all of us) would be if we turned there first, rather than last.

See you Sunday.