

It was nearly 4:00 a.m. I was in the extreme Northwestern part of Montana on vacation. Everyone in our rented condo was sleeping but I was wide-awake. I contemplated my options, which seemed to be somewhat limited.

I could lay in bed for 3-4 hours until my family woke up and decided it was time for breakfast. I could turn on the light and continue reading a mystery novel I had started two days before. I had finally gotten through the 5th or 6th chapter of descriptions and it was actually starting to get interesting. However, if I turned on the light I would have disturbed my wife so that option was short lived. I could have made my way up the winding staircase to the den and turned on the TV for a little early morning news, but I would have disturbed those sleeping in the loft. So, I figured my only other option was to bail out of the condo and go for a drive.

The air was crisp for an August morning even in Montana. The temperature was in the middle forties and the ever-present sound of wildlife was very noticeable even at that early hour. Maybe the animals couldn't sleep either.

I drove the short distance into town and was surprised by the number of people who were already out. I turned a corner, saw the bars were still doing a brisk business and realized people weren't "already out," they hadn't yet gone home for the evening.

A police car with lights flashing flew down the main street and turned a corner. I couldn't help but wonder what was happening in this seemingly sleepy little village that required the calling of the police at 4:00 a.m.. I crossed over the railroad tracks via the overpass and made my way toward Denny's at the edge of town to get some coffee and a little breakfast. As I drove, two teenagers looking to be no older than 14 or so, ran across the road in front of my vehicle. I wondered if they were the objects of the search by the police car I had seen just a few minutes prior.

I expected the Denny's to be nearly empty but to my surprise it was almost filled to capacity. I sat at a booth and observed the other patrons, many of whom seemed to be regulars since the waitresses were calling them by name. One group just to my right was finishing a poker game. There was a considerable sum of money on the table, and as expected, some of the participants had big smiles on their faces while others looked like they had taken a beating, which was probably the case.

There was a young girl looking to be about 15 sitting at the end of the counter near the restrooms and telephones who smiled expectantly at each man who walked by. I wondered what tragic events in her life brought her to this all night restaurant at such a young age.

The booth to my left was filled with three teenagers who were talking about the events of the evening. One was filled with anger as she loudly explained to her friends the trouble she had earlier with a school mate who accused her of being a "ho." Another teenager walked in, made his way to the booth but didn't sit down. He was picking up some to go orders and told the angry girl about seeing her mother a few hours before. The mother had asked him to buy her a drink and when he refused she disappeared into the night. The girl mentioned she hadn't seen her mother since 8:00 p.m., and it seemed, wasn't too concerned about her.

As I sat eating my breakfast, I couldn't help but wonder what a difference Jesus could make in the lives of these people. They had heard about Him because some were using His name quite often in their conversation. But, no doubt, they never had really gotten to understand who He is, what He did for them, and how believing in Him could change their lives.

Jesus did say, "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I'm confident one of the problems was, most of these people didn't even realize what they were missing, that there was something out there that was much better than the way they were living at the moment.

I have a sneaking suspicion that people in Arkansas, in many ways, are no different than Montana. It's been a long time since I have been out at 4:00 a.m. back here at home in Arkansas. It makes me wonder, after I've been sound asleep for hours, who is out, what are they doing, who is crying out for help, how their lives would change if only they could be touched by the love of Jesus.

I honestly don't know how to reach them. Especially those who don't even realize they need to be reached. But I do know that arguing "religion" at lunch with a group of co-workers is not going to get the job done. Perhaps we need to go out in the highways and byways and look for those who are truly lost and minister to them, even when they don't want ministering.

I admit this is way out of my comfort zone. But as I read the scriptures, I see Jesus doing many things that I would consider way out of my comfort zone. If I am truly going to walk in His steps, I need to venture out to help those who are in need.

It may even take getting out at 4:00 in the morning to get me to actually see who is out there crying for help, looking for answers, and needing to come in contact with the love of Jesus.

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