

That Warm Word: *Available*

Frederick Buechner – novelist, poet and ordained Presbyterian minister – tells about his wife’s grandfather, a man named George Shinn, who was a pastor back in 1880.

Shinn was summoned one midnight to the bedside of an old woman, who lived by herself. She had little money and few friends, and she was dying.

She told Shinn that she wanted another woman to come and stay with her for such time as she might have left, so Shinn and the woman’s doctor struck out in the darkness to find one for her.

The way it was told sounds like a parable. They knocked on doors and threw pebbles at second-story windows. One woman said she couldn’t come because she had children. Another said she simply wouldn’t know what to do, what to be, in a crisis like that. Another was suspicious of two men prowling around at that hour of night and wouldn’t even talk to them.

But finally – as the memoir of Dr. Shinn put it in the prose of another age – they *rapped at the humble door of an Irish woman, the mother of a brood of children. She put her head out of the window. “Who’s there?” she said. “And what can you want at this time of night?”*

They tell her the situation, and her warm, Irish heart cannot resist. “Will you come?” they said.

“Sure, and I’ll come, and I’ll do the best I can,” the woman replied.

“And she did come,” Dr. Shinn’s account read. “She did the best she could.”

The woman was willing. She was available. That’s a warm word in our language. *Available*. It means, I’m here when you call. I’m ready, willing, able.

Great crowds followed Jesus. On one occasion, according to the 14th chapter of Luke, He turned around and said to them: “Anyone who wants to be My follower must love Me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters – yes, more than his own life – otherwise he cannot be My disciple” (TLB).

Jesus was asking, “Are you available?”

Thousands of associates in Life Care and Century Park have responded like that Irish woman, doing the best they can.

– Beecher Hunter