

Why the Crowd Had to Wait

A man arrived in 1953 at the Chicago railroad station to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

He stepped off the train – a tall man with bushy hair and a big mustache. As the cameras flashed and city officials approached with hands outstretched to meet him, he thanked them politely.

Then he asked to be excused for a minute. He walked through the crowd to the side of an elderly black woman struggling with two large suitcases. He picked them up, smiled, and escorted her to the bus, helped her get on, and wished her a safe journey.

Albert Schweitzer next turned to the crowd and apologized for keeping them waiting.

One member of the reception committee said to a reporter, “That’s the first time I ever saw a sermon walking.”

Schweitzer, a French-German theologian, organist, writer, humanitarian and physician, had won the Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of *Reverence for Life*, expressed in many ways, but most famously in founding and sustaining the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambarene, now in Gabon, West Central Africa.

His train-station occasion calls to mind the story of a young seminary graduate who came to the lectern, very self-confident and immaculately dressed. He began to deliver his first sermon in his first church, and the words simply would not come out. Finally, he burst into tears and ended up leaving the platform, obviously humbled.

Two older ladies were sitting in the front row, and one remarked to the other, “If he’d come in like he went out, he would have gone out like he came in.”

Both of these incidents illustrate the reality that we’ve all been given a great task – to live in harmony, to weep with the mournful, to laugh with the joyful, to not be conceited. We are called to be righteous, but not self-righteous. We are to be humble.



For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 14:11 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter