
Country Philosopher

If It's Not Too Late

By Amos Arthur Holmes



If I should die.

It would be too soon for there are things still left to do. Mountains to climb...and seas to sail...wrongs to right...and friends to hail. It would be too soon for me to die.

I have never once, in all this life, touched a star. Or taken a human derelict into my home. I have passed orphanages and violets with ugly unconcern. And in the darkness of my conscience I feel regret. Yes, dear friends, I need more time.

Time to feel compassion for all the wrongs I've done. Not large things that poison the soul for eternity, but tiny things that have hardened my heart. I must tell the beggar I have a dime to spare...I must give the stray dog a bone...I must kneel before the altar...and call my daughter on the phone. So many things that I must do before I die.

Have I really told my wife I love her? Have I done it in a way that lights a million sparkles in her eyes? Have I held her hand with such tenderness that great waves of warmth speed rapidly to her heart? Have I given her that one deep glance that shouts my sweet affection? Have I told her about her eyes...or the magic of her smile...have I really felt her goodness...all this while?

I know that there are things to say and praises grand to lay gently on her ear. I must rub her back and listen to her crying. I must fetch her water and stoke her fire and massage her spirit. For in the pity of my humble weakness I believe she has never known the intensity of my caring. And I must tell her this before I die.

I must stop beside a rose and bend to taste the fragrance. I must lie upon a patch of moss and watch the stars. There are so many things I haven't done. I have never clothed the needy... or touched the sky... I have never eased a suffering... or heard a black man cry. And... dear God... give me time to do these things.

What insidious demon has stilled the good within me? What horrible blight has killed the tender impulse or smothered the friendly smile? Why haven't I held a crying child...why couldn't I understand...why haven't I only once...held out a helping hand?

I see the dark, shadowy figure of death beckoning me with boney finger and cold indifference. Can't it see I need those moments...to ease the pain that never ends...just a little more time upon this earth...to smile at friends? Can't it see that?

I must get to the end of my rainbow and frolic with the butterflies. I must have one more Christmas to watch the sweet agony of suspense that wraps itself around my grandchildren. The tinsled tree...the windup toy...the ring of laughter...the boundless joy. And I promise...dear God, I promise...I will not sit there silent and poised...thinking of bills and ignoring the love. I will blow up a balloon for Amy Jo...and race Bobby around the tree...I will tenderly hug my precious Jill...and place her upon my knee. And there amongst love's sweet glow...I will kiss my wife beneath the mistletoe.

Isn't it strange that in all these years I haven't known my own insensitivity? Isn't it sorrowful that I have never once appreciated my wife's noble heart or felt the beauty of my children's love? I have never once, in all this time, fed the birds or given a penny to the poor. I have never mowed my neighbor's lawn...I've held nothing close or dear...I have never said one single prayer...or erased one single fear. And now, in the twilight of my years, I pray for extra days to rectify the wrongs I've done and time to rebuild the path I've forged in life.

I simply need more time.
Time to sit around the dinner table

and laugh at frivolous things. Time to plant the geranium and prune the lovely birch...time to gather up my family...and take them all to church. Time to acknowledge God's bountiful blessings and drop to my knees in gratitude.

I would like to take a fallen brother and help him to his feet. I would like to do the dishes and kiss away my wife's surprise. I would like to sing with a male quartet...or soothe a raging beast. ..I would like to dance with a leprechaun...and shake hands with a parish priest.

I would like to visit my mother's grave and quietly talk with her. I would like to gather my children and apologize for the mistakes I've made. I would like one more candy bar...one more lovely dance...if only I had the time...if only I had the chance.

How sad it is that I have passed through life without allowing my heart the expression of its goodness. How many kisses have I missed? How many passionate moments? How many gentle caresses or friendly overtures? How many birds have sung to my deafness and how many puppies would have licked my face? Ah! There are so many nice things that I must do.

Before I die.
