

When the Pig Came to Town

Intentionality is an interesting subject. At times it can even be a deep mystery. Over the years I have seen people almost paralyzed in the face of a great need to do something with their lives. They seemed unable to move or even take the first step toward a desired goal. I have seen others, in contrast, wake up in the morning as new human beings. They move out and never stop in their determination to forge new paths. It almost seemed like something stirred in their souls, a call that came from deep in the center of their being.

I remember an experience from my youth that has always made me wonder what there is in our souls that can be called forth. It was the time the pig came to town. I was about ten years old and it was a slow hot summer. My friends and I didn't feel like doing anything. Neither work nor play had any appeal. We spent most days sitting on the front steps of our favorite store or just hanging out on the corner. Then one day a pig came running down Main Street. It belonged to an old woman who lived on a small farm outside of town and it came running at an amazing speed right past our idleness. When we found out that the old woman was offering five dollars for the capture, five idle boys became radically intentional human beings and the pursuit began. We chased that pig all over town for the entire day but with little success. We had no idea that this idle, fat, pen dweller, became a different animal when on the run. We plotted and planned but had no luck catching the pig. We even made plans for how we would spend the reward and were certain it would be ours.

We gave up when evening came, but the next morning we were up early in hot pursuit once again, only to find that the pig was back in its pen. Twice more that summer the pig was on the run and the result was the same each time – we chased the pig all day and the next morning we would find it back in the pen.

Years later, we were told by an adult in the community that the old woman had let the pig out each time on purpose, just “to challenge those youngsters.” Each night the pig would come back, as the old woman knew, at feeding time, and she would slam the door when he went in to eat.

From time to time I think of that pig and what it stirred in our young souls. I also often wonder what that old woman was really up to, letting that pig run down Main Street like that and offering a reward she knew we would never collect.