

The Parable of the Last Horseman



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It was a bitter, cold evening. The old man's beard was glazed by winter's frost while he waited for a ride across the river. The wait seemed endless. His body became numb and stiff from the frigid north wind. He heard the faint, steady rhythm of approaching hooves galloping along the frozen path.

Anxiously, he watched as several horsemen rounded the bend. He let the first one pass by without an effort to get his attention. Then another passed by... and another.

Finally, the last rider neared the spot where the old man sat like a snow statue. As this one drew near, the old man caught the rider's eye and said, 'Sir, would you mind giving an old man a ride to the other side? There doesn't appear to be a passageway by foot.'

Reining his horse, the rider replied, "Sure thing. Hop aboard."

Seeing the old man was unable to lift his half-frozen body from the ground, the horseman dismounted and helped the old man onto the horse. The horseman took the old man not just across the river, but to his destination which was just a few miles away.

As they neared the tiny but cozy cottage, the horseman's curiosity caused him to inquire, "Sir, I notice that you let several other riders pass by without making an effort to secure a ride. Then I came up and you immediately asked me for a ride. I'm curious why, on such a bitter winter night, you would wait and ask the last rider. What if I had refused and left you there?"

The old man lowered himself slowly down from the horse, looked the rider straight in the eyes and replied, 'I've been around here for some time. I reckon I know people pretty well.'

The old-timer continued, 'I looked into the eyes of the other riders and immediately saw there was no concern for my situation. It would have been useless even to ask them for a ride. But when I looked into your eyes, kindness and compassion were evident, I knew, then and there, that your gentle spirit would welcome the opportunity to give me assistance in my time of need.'

Those heartwarming comments touched the horseman deeply.

I'm most grateful for what you have said," he told the old man. "May I never get too busy in my own affairs that I fail to respond to the needs of others with kindness and compassion.'

Lesson: Always look out for other people