WALK THIS WAY #3: *Humble Road*

Micah 6:8 "'No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.'" (NLT)

Almost trancelike, he sat. The traffic light swapped from red to green. He sat alone, a rarity on what typically was a busy road every other moment. He comprehended that the light was green—("Green means go, Daddy," he heard the singsong sound of his little boy's voice in his memory)—but for whatever reason he couldn't make his foot press the gas. Maybe he'd sit until somebody honked, he thought, as suddenly, a beep-beep penetrated the glass between he and the car behind him. Still. He sat. Alone in the parking lot, while all the people, many whom he knew well, streamed past his car, to enter the church. He considered it. He couldn't recall a time he had come here without his family; he had never attended alone. And he wouldn't begin today, he decided silently to himself, as he turned the key in the ignition and put the vehicle in gear once again, heading to the parking lot exit. Maybe divorce had stolen his family, but it wouldn't rob him of his dignity, he vowed.

We likely will never know the invisible, muted battles occurring within the protective confines of someone else's vehicle. We don't know the hell someone may have just driven away from or someone else might be driving toward or what lives have shattered and lay like shards of fragile glass strewn across the ground. Likewise, we are unaware of the circumstances in a person's home, behind the closed doors and the drawn shades and the white picket fences overshadowed with pretty flowers or Christmas lights. On pews next to us or prison cells or hospital rooms or wandering along a sullen shoreline.

But what we can be certain of is our response to those who walk in sadness and darkness and alone. Isn't it true how easily we all can be tripped up, encountering suddenly a tragedy never foreseen coming our way? Many we rub shoulders with weren't prepared for the divorce papers that showed up at the doorway by an unknown courier or the diagnosis that phoned in yesterday afternoon or the addiction that sneakily crouched in silence while someone let their guard down. What we can offer a friend or even a stranger we find struggling is the reminder that life happens, and the skirmish is real, but there is hope and grace and companionship along the way as we navigate through startling details of a circumstance one didn't expect. We need to encourage integrity and strength of character to the person breaking apart. We should offer undeserved compassion and kindness in the midst of someone's error. And lastly, we must walk in humility, because we never know when we might have to step in the shoes that someone else is wearing. Does it seem impossible to respond in this manner? Yes, in our own strength. But if we walk the way God would have us wander, we can help someone else's journey be less painful and more rewarding. Like Pastor Robert Schuller said, "Impossible? What an irresponsible word!"