

# Trinity 6, 2018

## Walk of the Turtle

2 Timothy 2:7-14

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*“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”*

Scripture tells us that God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak to confound the things that are mighty. It always amazes me how God speaks to us in the common everyday conversations we have with people we ‘bump’ into and how the common things of life can explain lives found in Christ. A customer at the store a few days ago relayed to me a vacation experience that touched him deeply. He had witnessed newly born turtles making their way out to sea. With his hands extended upward he expressed amazement how they new what to do, where to go. Not missing an opportunity, I too pointed to the heavens. I could see an ember of realization create a sparkle in his eyes as he walked away pondering the implications that experience offered his own walk with Christ. Turtles can give us a new perspective by which to look at our lives as we walk the Christian life in a dangerous world of uncertainty. In the turtles world only 1 in a 1,000 make it to adulthood...that should give us pause.

Perils and dangers surround all of creation...especially those who defy the devils leading and follow Jesus Christ. Think about the turtle for a moment. He lives his life always in or around water. He is not born in the water but in an earthly home prepared for him (holes in the sand or mud). As they mature they struggle from their earthly homes called by the deep waters of their true and future domicile. There are always dangers that lay in wait to sidetrack the turtle’s journey: rocks to stop the journey all together, logs to veer a longing turtle off the true path and predators out to devour and destroy any chance of survival (many are called, but few survive...). Those who do make it to sea go into a swimming frenzy, freedom to live the lives to which they are called. But even here dangers still lurk beneath the waters. As the turtle moves through life he must always be aware of his path. After devoting several

years to the vastness of the seas waters the turtle reemerges to nurture the next generation to the true path of life.

In the life of the turtle we are able to see a parallel existence with the Christian walk. We live temporarily in an earthly world where we are prepared for our spiritual walk as we enter the waters of baptism. Dangers come from every side to dissuade us; rocky ground, hard soil, shallow roots...changing societal values, diminishing morality, truth in exchanged for personal opinions. Those of us who do find ourselves within the enormity of God's Holy Spirit (the turtle's sea) have much to learn on our journeys as we continue the battle against sin. As the turtle is nourished on the yolk of its egg before it can feast on what the sea has to offer so must we move from the milk of the Word to the meat of the Word. Too many Christians take residence on the shallow shores never venturing into the deeper things of Christian life. But there is a new world that opens to those who continue to follow the calling of the Holy Spirit. We should never feel that we have arrived at our destination. Reaching our ultimate destination is God promise to the faithful and God will not fail those who are committed to His will. But our responsibility, here and now, is to learn from those who have gone before us that we may be approved unto God and share the Gospel truth with those willing to listen. Our ability to do so comes from our own commitments to seek the deeper things of the Christian Faith.

And having gone deep we now have something truly desirable to offer those who have not yet found their way in Christ that through their baptisms they may also enter the kingdom of God. That is what we are commissioned to do...present the Gospel of Christ that those called to be the children of God may enter domiciles not made with hands.

Ironically, In Paul's letter today we don't see Paul spreading the Gospel to non-believers. Paul is in the deep waters preaching to those who are already beyond milk, to not forget where they came from, to not forsake their callings, to not veer off the path and follow the crowd. *"Remember"*, says Paul, *"that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead..."* After swimming so long in our Christian faith there is the danger of taking Christ's resurrection for granted! We know it, we believe it, but for some the Resurrection truth becomes lost in conversation. The very resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and

His ascension into the presence of God the Father is a witnessed fact that exposes all other religions as secular ideologies. We must be careful that we don't get lost at sea and lose our way. We are to share the good news. We are to be lights to those who are lost and show them the way to safety and how to navigate the waters.

Our task is not easy. We don't get to cross a finish line at our Confirmations and walk away with a trophy. We have the grave responsibility to share God's Word in a world that is becoming increasingly tone deaf to the Gospel. After Paul reminds Timothy to not forget that "Christ was raised from the dead" he does not hide the truth that proclaiming Christ to the world will bring suffering to the Followers of the Way, *"Remember that Jesus Christ...was raised from the dead. Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds..."* It doesn't sound very logical to participate in something that we know will bring suffering and ridicule (and even death in some parts of the world). It is confusing that by proclaiming the truth, the salvation to eternal life and the love of God that such calamity could arise. Christians are suffering today as evildoers and being martyred, in one way or another, at the drop of a hat. Politics have polarized Christians against each other, nations are formulating relations in cohesions that seemed impossible not so long ago, and the talks of peace around the world continue to be backed up by more and more violence.

These times have been seen before. They are wakeup calls that the battle is not over. God's return, no matter how imminent, is not a call to sit back and rest from the fight. In his day Jeremiah spoke to the people of God that they might stand steadfast in spite of the perils that they would endure. This is what Jeremiah had to say, *"Without concern they dress my people's wound, saying, 'peace! peace!' whereas there is no peace. They should be ashamed of their loathsome deeds. Not they! They feel no shame, they do not even know how to blush. And so as others fall, they too will fall, will be thrown down when I come and punish them, Yahweh says. Yahweh says this, 'Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths: which was the good way? Take it and find rest for yourselves. But they have said, 'We will not take it.' (Jeremiah 6:14-16 New Jerusalem translation).*

Paul writes to Timothy and to all Christians to “*endure all things for the elect’s sakes that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*” And so must we stand strong against the burdens that befall us in our day. And there are burdens aplenty! Satan is out to divide us and lead us astray, to keep us in the world and out of the sea. But through the door that is Jesus Christ we enter a new world in the sea of life where the Holy Spirit breathes life into us that we may awake out of our slumber; for the salvation of the world is near at hand.

I leave you with these familiar words from the prophet Isaiah; *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*” (Isaiah 57:15). If God be for us, who can be against us...May we enter the sea that we may return glory to our Father in Heaven.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.