

“A Time for Eternity”
 Jeremiah 1:4-10; 1 Cor. 13:1-13
 Sunday, February 3, 2019
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The TORTISE and the HARE each had a different sense of time.

The hare was off to a start!

And the tortoise just moved - - slowly along...

The Hare FLITTED from this to that. / He ran as fast as he could. All he ever had in mind was the present moment - - or second - - and he did not see the whole race ahead.

But - - while the hare ran around and tired himself out - - the tortoise moved steadily along - - with the whole scope of eternity in her mind. / She was slow - - but confident.

The fable works so well - - partly because the identity of each animal - - is reflected in their sense of time. / Their sense of time - - is connected to their way of being in the world.

He is not just fast - - he IS - - a hare.

She is not just slow and steady - - she IS a tortoise

Who they are - - is reflected in how they LIVE their lives.

And that - - makes me wonder - - about us.

Does the way we live our lives - - reflect - - who we are - - deep down?

And when it comes to our - - sense of time - - what about that?

Well this morning - - it's the perspective of the tortoise - - that interests me most.

I'll call it a sense of - - eternity. / God the eternal - - who has been with us sense our birth - - and sense the birth of the world - - the initial creation of everything - - moving over the face of the waters.

And here's my question about that:

Does what we do - - and the way we live our lives - - reflect that?

Do we - - in any way - - reflect what we know about God as - - eternal?

Do we really believe our lives are grounded in - - something eternal?

Eternal love...

Love that never ends...

In a world where everything flits by - - every day a new tragedy - - every day a new fad.

In a world like that - - do we live - - differently?

Both of our scripture readings for today tell us something about eternity.

Paul's letter to the people in Corinth says, "love never ends"

Everything else - - will pass away - - but love is eternal.

And Jeremiah in the Old Testament - - is about a calling from God - - that fills the prophet's whole life . / He was called by God - - before time - - from the very beginning - - before Jeremiah was formed in the womb - - before even the creation of the earth and sky.

So to take these two scripture readings as our guide...

The two eternal things are:

God's love - - and our calling from God to live faithfully.

These two things are - - forever.

These two things are - - eternal.

Timeless...

It all reminds me of an old story about two PIG farmers.

Let's say - - one is from Oregon - - and the other is from Iowa.

As some of you know - - I grew up in Iowa.

The Iowa farmer asks the Oregonian farmer:

“Hey buddy - - where are you taking those hogs?”

“I’m turning them loose in the woods” - - says the free range Oregonian.

“In the woods - - they can feed on acorns, and seeds, and grass and stuff”.

“Oh yea”, says the Iowa farmer, “We don’t do that in Iowa - - we PEN them up”

“What for?” asks the Oregonian

“Well, we feed them corn, and keep them all together in one spot - - it gets them fat much faster - - it saves time”.

“Awww”, the Oregonian farmer is not impressed, “What does **time matter** to a pig?!”

What does it mean - - to use our time wisely?

Do we believe - - our lives are grounded in - - something eternal?

Eternal love...that never ends...

Do we live our lives in response to our - - eternal calling from God - - to live faithfully

Or - - do we live - - like - - even things from just yesterday are old news.

Do we live like the distracted hare - - OR the steady - - eternal - - tortoise?

Let’s look more closely at each of the scripture readings.

First the New Testament:

In first Corinthians Paul says that love never ends.

This might be difficult to believe - - given things in our world and on the news lately.

If you look around you might conclude that - - everything ends - - and people stop loving each other - - and there is no one who can’t be bought for a price - - and we are great at arguing - - but not so good at loving. / That’s what you might conclude - - and who would blame you!?

There’s a lot out there that is - - glittery - - and sexy - - and only lasts for an instant!

Meanwhile - - some of us - - spend OUR time - - paying bills - - and going to work - - or if you are a government worker - - working without pay - - and doing yard work and laundry.

We more ordinary people spend our time - - visiting parents - - and fixing things.

And we ask: Is THAT love?

And the answer is: That's REAL love.

What does it mean - - that - - when our parents marriages sometimes end - - OR our marriages end - - or our children's marriages end - - that God's LOVE - - NEVER ends?

What does it mean when we ARGUE with people we live close to - - people like spouses and friends and children and other church members? / We argue - - BUT we stick together!

That's different from the arguing out there - - that divides - - people who DON'T know each other - - but just interact on twitter.

Sticking together - - that's eternal.

Is there anyone you haven't talked to in a while - - who you still consider a friend?

Someone who will ALWAYS be there?

Maybe it's time to send a text or make a call...?

But wait - - -- this is NOT about making us feel guilty - - or inadequate.

Hear me: Love is NOT *another thing* we don't quite measure up at.

The scripture reading doesn't say:

“Love *should* never end”

“We *better make sure* our love never ends”

It simply says: Love never ends.

Love is. / That's all I'm saying...

Has anyone here ever signed a letter with an X and an O.?

At the end of a card or letter you write XOXO... Or an X circled by an O?

Hugs and kisses are what we usually think of. / But what we're really doing - - is making an OATH! / A promise to remember the eternal love of God - - in Christ. / That's where the custom started:

The X symbolized the cross. AND An X is ALSO the symbol for an oath.

In this old custom- - AFTER an oath was made - - and the X was written, it was kissed.

Sealed - - with a kiss.

For me this helps put this custom into a more eternal perspective.

God's love - - never ends.

God loved us into being - - and God loves us still.

Eternally.

That's what 1 Corinthians is about.

In the Old Testament, Jeremiah the prophet has an eternal sense of calling.

Jeremiah was called by God to a faithful way of life.

This calling came from God in a deep and eternal way - - as I've said.

Before Jeremiah was formed in the womb...

Before the earth and sky were created...

Before all that - - God KNEW Jeremiah - - and called to him - - it says.

This calling - - meant - - that there was something for Jeremiah to DO.

There was something for him to do with his life - - a purpose.

Not just random living.

Not just waiting around for the next big flash in the pan.

A calling - - that was eternal.

God touched Jeremiah's lips - - to silence his objections.

God said, don't worry - - I will put the words in your mouth.

I wonder if any of us can relate to this experience...

How many of us - - feel - - - called by God - - - KIND OF?

We feel there - - MIGHT be some calling or purpose - - but we are not sure...

And then when an opportunity comes - - we get scared.

We flinch.

Like Jeremiah!

Who said: "I'm not ready - - I'm only a youth"

God just touched Jeremiah's lips - - to silence him.

"Jeremiah, you are not only called - - your calling is ETERNAL"

As I read that I remembered once how my grandmother did something similar.

I didn't want to do something - - can't remember what it was now. / I made excuses,
 "It's not fun - - it will be difficult - - I don't think I can". / And she just reached down and put a
 finger on my mouth - - shhhhh.

Did she know then - - that I would see things differently years later?

Did she know - - that I would one day see life - - from HER side?

Did she know that one day - - I would discover - - her letters to grandpa in the attic?

That - - is part of what it means to live with a sense of eternity.

Remember the tortoise?

The tortoise just moved - - slowly along...

God the eternal - - who has been with us since our birth - - and sense the birth of
 the world - - the initial creation of everything - - IS moving over the face of the waters. /

There is an Australian poet named Fitzgerald who put it this way:

“Eternity - - is more than space reaching out without end.

More than time without end...

More than infinity working around in a circle...

Eternity is a placeless DOT - - the pinpoint of beginning.”

“The pinpoint of beginning is:

The impossible possibility - - of something - - created out of nothing...

As God moves - - over the face of the waters.”

So - - as life flits by on our screens - - remember there is something more.

Something eternal.

Both Paul and Jeremiah remind us of that.

Amen