

peace be with you

# weekly devotional

from the desk of Rev. Marta Wheeler

SAINT PAUL BENSON

*March 30, 2022*

## LIFE ON THE GALAPAGOS

Out of the bus window shouts  
are heard at the spotting!

A gigantic solitary tortoise on  
the side of the lonesome highway  
extends her telescoping neck out  
of the ancient looking shell and  
grazes on grasses  
and cactus in the desert heat.

Only she knows why she's left  
to go off on her own.

I wonder if she has fertilized eggs  
to bury in the sand and will then leave  
them to hatch on their own accord?

Even if she has no agenda  
wandering at the contemplative  
slow pace of a tortoise  
can be refreshing.

As we wander, the hottest, driest  
regions of our souls yield the most  
refreshing and joyous spaces within.

Just when you think you can't  
take one more step, someone offers  
a hand and so you continue onward.

## ***Luke 15: 11b-32*** ***Occasions for Celebration***

**15** <sup>11</sup> Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the inheritance.' Then the father divided his estate between them. <sup>13</sup> Soon afterward, the younger son gathered everything together and took a trip to a land far away. There, he wasted his wealth through extravagant living.

<sup>14</sup> "When he had used up his resources, a severe food shortage arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to eat his fill from what the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, but I'm starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands." <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

*continued*

## **Luke 15: 11b-32**

*Continued*

“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then his son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, ‘Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! <sup>23</sup> Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting <sup>24</sup> because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Now his older son was in the field. Coming in from the field, he approached the house and heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> The servant replied, ‘Your brother has arrived, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he received his son back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> Then the older son was furious and didn’t want to enter in, but his father came out and begged him. <sup>29</sup> He answered his father, ‘Look, I’ve served you all these years, and I never disobeyed your instruction. Yet you’ve never given me as much as a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours returned, after gobbling up your estate on prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’ <sup>31</sup> Then his father said, ‘Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.’”

## **Wandering Like the Tortoise**

The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates the abundant love of God who is always ready to forgive and welcome us back. Even as a child, I was a wanderer often staying at a friend’s house too long or disappearing for an afternoon while feeling the grains of wheat between my fingers on a lazy autumn day. Although most of us haven’t gone away to the extent of the Prodigal, who doesn’t have regrets and scenarios we replay in our minds?

The wandering tortoises of The Galapagos aren’t out to win any races. They move at the average pace of 1.7 MPH and process food just as slowly. They seem happy enough living there. Humans are only allowed to settle in 5% of the islands, so there is certainly ample room for tortoises to roam much like the dinosaurs did. Just the sight of their massive shells is quite amazing!

Sometimes roaming sounds pretty good to me as well. Taking my time, enjoying God’s creation, and sleeping under the stars with my head tucked into the shell for safety.

No matter where you reside, grace upon grace is available to you. What a gift that is!

*God’s love, peace, and hope to you!*

*Marta*

*Rev. Marta Wheeler*