

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

Fall Back, Spring Forward

Romans 8:12-25

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 11)

Analysis by Marcus Felde

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh– 13 for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. 18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, 21 in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is

not hope. For who waits for what is seen? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

DIAGNOSIS: FAST TIME

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Can't Wait*

Recalcitrant Indiana stays on Standard Time while the rest of you save daylight by advancing your clocks. (We who live near the boundary refer to the temporary difference as “fast time” and “slow time.”) Paul exhorts Christians not to set their watches ahead just yet, but to wait, because we are saved “in hope” while we suffer “in fact.” Suffering in fact (v. 17), we are tempted to scratch all the time, listening to our bodies’ “please.”

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Won't Listen*

Refuse to be led by the Spirit? If so, then we will “please” (=be led by) an interloper, a heistgeist who will make slaves of us. If we won't listen to the witness of the Christgeist, we will not only miss hearing that we are God's children, we will miss being God's children. “For all who are led by the Spirit are children of God.” Not listening to the Spirit, by default we are slaves to evidence. Body. Earth. Stuff like that.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Don't Last*

People like that don't last; they don't have the right stuff. Who was it that said, “You don't have something to live for, until you have something to die for”? Well, I guess if you live for perishables you die with them.

PROGNOSIS: SLOW TIME

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *Can't Lose*

Someone heard the groans, and interposed his own life between us

perishers (Aussie, I believe—they also use the epithet “rotters”—either will do) and the pit. We spring (!) free, and although the freedom is still a ways off, the first fruits and the adoption papers really make believers out of us.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Ain't Afraid*

“Abba!” is our 9-1-1, but we seek no first aid or ceasefire, no drug or satisfaction. We cry to our Father that we want to see the perfection of creation, the fulfillment of our freedom, the glory that is to be revealed. To whom but the Father could we cry for these?

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Can't Wait!*

“Can't wait” is no longer the old, presenting symptom of impatience. Now, “Can't wait!” is the babble of excited children talking of a vacation to come, or something like that. In fact, we can wait, precisely because what we look forward to is a glory compared to which our present suffering is a little “itch in time.” Christians live slow. We can afford to. Eternity awaits. Tortoises, unite!