

Second Sunday in Lent, March 5, 2023

Scripture Reading: Psalm 121

Sloth is the failure to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done — like the kamikaze pilot who flew seventeen missions. —John Ortberg

There's a word for laying around all day, doing nothing. It's a fine old theological term, one that's numbered among the Seven Deadly Sins. The word is "sloth."

Kathleen Norris is a Presbyterian elder who has written extensively about her spiritual journey. After considerable literary success, something happened to Kathleen's spiritual life. Her husband got cancer and needed constant care. Her aging father needed more help and support than her aging mother could give him. So, Kathleen moved back to her native Honolulu, and cared for her husband and father. Here's what she wrote about the experience:

"I felt dead inside. I dreaded waking in the morning, and sometimes went straight from bed to the couch, where I would watch television or do crossword puzzles until it became absolutely necessary to rouse myself to action. ... I was a far weaker soul than I cared to admit, a person pathetically subject to the sin of sloth. We often think of sloth as a harmless form of physical laziness, and joke about how long it's been since we vacuumed the carpet. But sloth is much more than laziness. It is an inability to concentrate on serious matters, and profound weariness of soul."

Kathleen learned it was all about her inability to focus. She felt pulled in so many different directions: so many chores to do, so many people who needed her help. She slipped into a kind of passivity, able to do only the bare minimum of what needed to be done.

Distractions can be more of a problem than many people realize. Think of the classic image of a lion tamer at the circus. If you picture a lion tamer, what sort of equipment does he or she have? A whip, surely. Maybe a pistol, to make a loud noise and frighten the beast. But there's one other item of equipment you always see in a lion tamer's hand: *a chair*.

Now, why do you suppose that would be? The whip and the gun make sense, but why a chair?

The reason is that the four legs of the chair interfere with the lion's visual perception. Wave a chair in front of a lion's face, and the lion's brain tries to focus on all four legs at once. This overloads the neural circuits. A kind of paralysis overwhelms the animal. The king of beasts becomes passive, weak, disabled — all because its attention is fragmented.

So, too, with us. When distracted by the cares and anxieties of life, we lose our ability to *press forward to what lies ahead*. Instead, we sit back on our haunches, or flop on our sides, doing nothing. That's sloth. And perhaps, during Lent, it is something we might consider.

—Carl Wilton, adapted from HomileticsOnline.com. Used by permission.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to regain focus and keep my eyes on what has foremost importance. Amen.

*Blessings,
Lesa & Pastor Ben Motz*

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Leviticus 20-23
- Monday:** Leviticus 24-27
- Tuesday:** Mark 1-3
- Wednesday:** Mark 4-6
- Thursday:** Mark 7-10
- Friday:** Mark 11-13
- Saturday:** Psalms 25-28



March 2023						
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

PROBLEMS AT THE ZOO!

A rookie zookeeper one day is preparing to place new signs on all the animal exhibits, but he trips over something and spills all the letters on the ground. Now he has to unscramble the letters so that he correctly identifies the animals in the zoo. Can you help him?

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------|------------|-------|
| NLOI | _____ | RAFEGIF | _____ |
| RLUTTE | _____ | GPEUNINS | _____ |
| KAESNS | _____ | LAORP ERAB | _____ |
| LOW | _____ | CURPOENIP | _____ |
| EHCTEHA | _____ | HISF | _____ |
| GREIT | _____ | BIGBON | _____ |
| KOMEYN | _____ | RREENID | _____ |
| RABE | _____ | BZREA | _____ |
| EESTPNALH | _____ | KSSRAH | _____ |
| PDALOR | _____ | SINCTSE | _____ |
| RROTPA | _____ | GORSF | _____ |
| LKAAO | _____ | LMAEC | _____ |

SOLUTION: Left column — lion, turtle, snakes, owl, cheetah, tiger, monkey, bear, elephants, leopard, parrot, koala; Right column — giraffe, penguins, polar bear, porcupine, fish, gibbon, reindeer, zebra, sharks, insects, frogs, camel.