

## **Devotion – Tenth Week after Pentecost**

### **Rev. Jeanne Simpson**

I have been following Simone Biles' struggles with the Olympic gymnastic events with dismay. I was so excited about her participation, and I anticipated days of gold medals from her. But she faltered on every landing in the trials and then withdrew at the beginning of the team competition, citing mental health issues, and she hasn't participated since. The Sunday AJC had an article about gymnasts' fear of "twisties." I had never heard that term before. It happens when a gymnast loses control of the body while in the air, and either twists unintentionally, or misses a twist that was planned. The gymnast literally loses sense of where the body is in relation to a planned routine, a direction, or the floor. It can be dangerous, because the gymnast can fall off a beam or vault, or stumble in the landing due to not having completed the planned routine properly. And once it happens the first time, the mind can take over and cause it to happen repeatedly, unless the gymnast goes through a retraining exercise to get the mind and body back in sync.

I thought about the "twisties" and our lives as Christians in today's society. It seems to me that we are in a period of the "twisties," where what we have always expected to occur in societal interactions often doesn't happen anymore. We're used to being polite and speaking to strangers with a "good morning" and "how are you" or opening the door for someone. We're used to driving down the road and minding our own business without a racer coming up behind us and practically pushing us up the road. We are used to staying out of heated political discussions and assuming that our political views are private. We are used to following directives from health officials when it comes to dangerous, life threatening diseases. We are used to interacting with friends and family on Facebook or email without seeing vitriolic posts.

But that is not happening. Our society has the "twisties" and has lost its sense of where it is in day to day interactions with each other. Conversations can turn nasty in a heartbeat. Driving a car on the interstate has become dangerous. Going for a walk in a park can be deadly. Our so-called "civilized" society has become "uncivilized." We have forgotten where we are as human beings bound to other human beings in meaningful, polite discourse. We continue to encounter people who certainly have lost any sense of Christian charity and concern.

I wonder what God thinks about all this. I know what Paul would have to say – he said it very eloquently in Romans:

Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

And then Paul speaks to us as believers and reassures us during these times of the "twisties":

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

So we have hope, and if we continue to live as we should, we serve as examples of Christ's desire for us – to know where we are and to be able to land on our feet, stable and secure in the love that he poured out for us. And we can serve as examples to those around us who need some help getting untwisted.

***Jeanne***