

Turn Around!

Children's Message, Palisades Presbyterian Church

by Bill Menke, April 22, 2007

As some of you know, my name is Bill. I am very pleased to be here talking with you today. I'd like for you to sit a little differently, today, facing the back of the Church. I'm going to sit back here, so please turn around so you can see me.

I, for one, am very glad that it's finally sunny and warm. Spring is finally here. What about you? Yesterday morning I went to the park. The trees are starting to bud and flowers are blooming. The park I went to has a pond, and when I stood at the water's edge, I could see that the turtles were out, sitting on logs. I saw many, of all different sizes, from little ones [hand motions to indicate just a few inches], to ones that were really big [motion a foot]. Turtles sleep all winter long on the bottom of the pond, and when they wake up, they like to sit out in the sun and get warm. I bet they really feel good!

While I was standing at the shore, watching the turtles, I heard a voice call out behind me, "Hi, Bill!" What did I have to do to find out who was talking? That's right, I had to stop looking at the turtles, turn around and see who it was.

You know, there could be someone waving at us from the front of the church right now [Pastor Ray begins to wave] trying to get our attention. What do we have to do? That's right, turn around! Why don't you come down and join us, Ray?

Let's imagine that we're at home, playing in the corner of a room. Maybe we're playing with Lego's. They're a favorite of mine. So let's pretend [looking at the floor and making hand motions]: we're sitting in the corner, playing with our Lego's and we hear a voice behind us, "Your friend is here!" What do we have to do? That's right, turn around. [We all turn around]. What happens if we don't? That's right; we can't tell who's there. And maybe we hurt our friend's feelings, too.

The first words that Jesus said when he began to teach us¹. He said, "Turn around, for God's Time is near!"

What do you suppose he meant by "God's Time is near?" You don't know? That's fine, because that is a story for another Sunday.

Let's all say a prayer together: "Dear God, help us to be always ready to stop what we are doing and turn around to see who is there, for sometimes it may be you".

¹I am paraphrasing here the words that Jesus used at the start of his public ministry, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17, New International Version). The word "repent" literally means "turn around" in Aramaic, Jesus' native language.