

“Are Your Toes On the Line?” – November 27, 2016
by Wayne J. Schneider – Gloria in Excelsis Deo!

“Are Your Toes on the Line?”
St. Mark 13:33

It was a love/hate relationship with my drill instructor in Army basic training. There was no slack in his agenda and he stayed in-your-face when instructing. But, you could discern a caring side if you looked. If someone misplaced an item, you would be in for it. Yet, later, unobtrusively, he would find the individual a replacement. His job was to get us ready for war.

In the Season of Advent we are not, of course, preparing ourselves for war, but for receiving the Christ Child. In this First Sunday of the Church Year, we acknowledge that faith is a gift, but it requires preparation to keep faith alive and well. It’s so easy to become an observer during Advent; to slip into the spiritual couch potato mode. We are going to look together at our *‘faith posture’* today, and in the Sundays of Advent. Today we take a look at ‘toes.’ To both understand and arrive at the genuine meaning of Christmas, we must prepare ourselves.

The prophet Isaiah tells us to be ready, fully aware. Jesus’ disciples were also because they expected Jesus immediate return. *“If only you would tear open the heavens and come down! Mountains would quake before You like fire igniting brushwood or making water boil. If you would make your name known to your enemies, the nations would tremble in Your presence. (Isa. 64:1-2)*

But, after the Ascension, Jesus did not return when expected and we are waiting still. He asked us to be ready out of love that we would not tire of waiting. This is difficult for us to do because we live in the land of instant gratification. God’s timing is perfection. As God’s disciples we are to be vigilant, eagerly trusting His word.

St. Peter says, in 2 Peter 3:8 *“Don’t let it escape your notice, dear friends, that with the Lord a single day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day.”*

In a cartoon, a bum is speaking with God. He asks, *“Is it true that a minute in your time is like a thousand years?”* God says yes. The man speaks again: *“And is it also true that a penny is as a million dollars?”* Again, God says yes. The old bum slyly says, *“Can I have a penny?”* And God says, *“Just a minute.”*

We encounter problems when we presume to understand God’s timetable. In Theology the term for this is ‘anthropomorphizing,’ making God behave as we do. It is a temptation to package up God in human terms. Our expectations are projected onto God, and then we complain because God

doesn't work the way we want!

For 'Followers of the Way' our responsibility is to *live into* God's plans. We use a calendar but God does not. We wait upon God; not the opposite

Jesus knows better. It is not God's responsibility to live up to our expectations. It is our responsibility to live up to God's! We wait on God yet we do not wait passively. We don't 'lay back'; rather, we stand on our toes like a sprinter.

My credo, my belief, is that Jesus came to establish His new way of love and community, and to substitute this for the oppressive organization, the immoralism, dogmatism and many other 'isms.' He went to heaven and the church is waiting for His return.

There are two concerns regarding our waiting. The first is if we are not watchful we may develop a false sense of security. The early church almost lost its light because they became lax, and one result of this was the second generation believers were in danger of forgetting. God wants to keep on our toes.

The second concern in waiting is despondency. When Jesus doesn't come we grow weary, even of life itself. Mental health professionals remind us that there are many causes of depression; spiritual, physical, emotional or a combination of both.

Hopelessness comes when we are no longer awaiting God's intervention in our lives. Lack of waiting pushes us away from that which we need most; the awareness of God being present in our lives.

The cure for these spiritual illnesses is returning your toes to the line! When we return to our searching, waiting, and watching, we discover God is right around the corner! Symbols of God's presence are all around us if we open our spiritual eyes. Jesus will come just as He promised.

The Holy Scripture tells us that God will send Emmanuel in the fullness of time. Max Lucado says, not just "*God made us. God thinks of us. God above us. But God with us.*" Mary and Joseph make a reservation on Expedia; but many slept through the Incarnation. Only to those who were 'on their toes,' ready at the line, saw the promises kept. God promised a Messiah and God gave us Jesus.

We will never value the deep meaning of Christmas until we ruminate on the Light; both in the music and lights of our celebrations; but also in the metaphor of going through the emotional darkness, the dark night of the soul, to see the Light of Hope.

No matter where you are, if you are ready, you will see the signs of His coming. Each day is a day of joy and the opportunity of seeing in fresh ways. Norman brown writes, *“Language is always old testament, to be made new; rules, to be broken; dead metaphor, to be made alive; literal meaning, to be made symbolical; oldness of letter to be made new by the spirit.”*

The Season of Advent is a time of holy anticipation, of expectancy. Hopelessness cannot find us when we are vigilant. The signs of His appearance are seen in lights on a wreath, sacred music, or in the figures in a crèche. Not many were searching for the Messiah so long ago. But today, the church universal and the hosts in heaven are looking with eagerness for the return of the Christ Child. And He will arrive again! Standing with our toes on the line we await God’s glory.

Thomas Moore tells us that *“If we decide to follow the Jesus way, for example, his teaching on radical love and care for those outside your circle, and become a full-time healer, instinctively adopting a healing posture whenever you see trouble or suffering, then you know what Christmas is all about. It’s the birth of this sensibility in you.”* Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly. Alleluia. Amen.