

When I was a kid

When I was a kid, growing up in Gladstone in the mid to late 1950's, life was a veritable smorgasbord of fascinating activities for kids with a penchant for adventure. There were ponds to slosh through while searching for frogs, toads, salamanders, or snakes to capture and study. There were caves to explore, illuminated only by match light. There were forested areas wherein one could cut trees with an axe, assuming they were doing so in a clandestine manner so as not to attract the attention of the "neighborhood watchdogs". There were rivers and streams to wade or swim in as the search and hunt for anything from fishes and eels to crawdads went on. We could also scrounge pop bottles and beer bottles which were redeemable at the 3-way inn grocery store and purchase potato chips candy bars or soda pop, depending on the amount of the proceeds from the scrounging.

We could go through life at a "dead run" from one interesting activity to another, not giving a thought to the safety of our activities. I was especially fond of the swamps, bogs, and ponds which festooned the area; one particular pond being "the lake" at the Adventist camp. This pond was replete with aquatic life of a wide variation. There were frogs and salamanders galore, and the concomitant infestation of mosquitoes, dragonflies, and other miscellaneous fauna as well as the flora of lily pads, duckweed, and other plant life worked together to make "the lake" a productive ecosystem suitable for limnological study in its own rite.

Sadly, "the lake" has been filled in. Most of the other prolific ponds, swamps, and bogs have either been filled in with rocks and dirt, or have been used as a dump for old tires, car parts, and household garbage. The eight year old intrepid explorers of my era have passed into oblivion, acquiescing to the appeal of Nintendo and computer games. The trails which once were explored have over grown, and the inviting caves have also been pushed onto the back burners of life. Boys of today will tragically never know the thrill of coming home with a large bullfrog in one hand, muddy from the armpits down, with a captivating tale of exploration and conquer, only to have your mother "yell at you" because "you could have drowned in the quicksand". (She was totally oblivious to the fact that your co-explorer saved your life by passing you the end of a long stick to pull you out of the quagmire, and, this was a bonding thing.)

Science tells us that amphibians are what are known as indicator species. That is to say, you can tell a lot about the environment in which the amphibian is found by the general condition of the condition of the amphibians found therein.

For example, today it is not uncommon to find grotesque malformation in the species living in a heavily polluted pond, bog, or swamp. A trip to yesterday's frog pond leaves you with feeling of despair because you find in place of the healthy pond, there is a garbage dump with an oil slick on top of it. There is very little, if any, healthy aquatic life. There is an unnatural stench in the air in the place of the bouquet of a healthy pond. It has become apparent that we have disgraced ourselves in our handling of our God given responsibility to care for His created world[1]. "If we set aside all the philosophical and spiritual evaluations he makes of himself, Man, viewed objectively, is essentially the glutton and waster of the animal kingdom".[2]

From another perspective, take that of society in general. Just as there are indicator species in Biology, so there are societal indicators about the health of a society. When I was a kid, before the explorations would begin, I would walk with my dad down to the neighbor's house where he would get a ride into Portland to go to work. I would catch a ride back with the Milkman, who told me that if I was going to ride in his milk truck I'd have to work. He would give me bottles to put out and I would have to bring the empty bottles back. They were glass bottles, so I was always careful not to break any. I had been given responsibility and I was careful not to betray the trust bestowed upon me. Now, fifty years later, the milkman does not exist, bottles have been replaced with landfill clogging plastic or cardboard containers, and any stranger giving a prepubescent male a ride in his business vehicle would be fired and arrested for a non-existent child molestation. A kid can not now learn what people do for a living first hand. The kid is told "look it up on the internet". The internet does not teach the kid that workers are a part of society, and each worker is a contributing piece of the puzzle of society. Unfortunately, these suspicions are not without foundation.

Society is, in the words of comedian George Carlin, "circling the drain". This is apparent in the manifestations of the depravity of man in his expression of this sinful nature. The Bible says that "all have sinned and fallen short of the

Glory of God”[3], and that the wages of this sin is death[4]. It is of no wonder that society finds itself in the throes of “sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies,[5] ” as well as the associated expressions of souls lost in the sinful nature of man as it struggles in vain to find meaning to life on its own accord. Sin has, to be sure, gotten worse and not better in the fifty years which has elapsed since I was a kid.

While sin has not changed, neither has the solution to the problem of sin. The same Book of Romans which says that the wages of sin is death also continues with the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ[6]. Man, on his own, is lost, and the behavior of the society in which he is forced to abide demonstrates this in the way it lives. There is, however, the hope promised in the Book of Romans, which also expresses itself when the hope indwells man. Just as the sinful nature expresses itself, so the spirit filled man has evidential deeds of expression in his nature. This Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, patience, and self control.

It is the goal of the spirit filled person to veer away from the deeds of the flesh which only pull us downward to ruin and steer toward the Christ we claim to serve. The further we get away from the old nature we once had the more we become like the Christ we serve, and the Fruit of the Spirit become evident in its expression in our lives.

[1] Genesis 1: 28-31

[2] Williams, Jay “Fall of the Sparrow” Oxford University Press 1951 pg 61

[3] Romans 3:23

[4] Romans 6:23

[5] Galatians 5: 19-21

[6] Romans 6: 23