

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

East Moline, Illinois

Pastor Becky Sherwood

September 9, 2018, The Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost/The Twenty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Proverbs 2: 1-2, 8-9, 22-23; James 2:1-10, 14-17

VON MAUR, THE DOLLAR STORE, AND THE SNEETCHES

Sometimes I think one of the best ways to understand a Bible passage is to hear a story that helps us “see” what God’s word is saying. So this week I went looking for a story to help us with James, chapter 2

The more stories I read online, the more I kept coming back to a story I learned as a young child. It is a Dr. Seuss story called “*The Sneetches*” that my sister and I had on a record (or should I say vinyl) that we would play over and over again.

It is not a religious story in one sense of the word, but in another sense it truly is a gospel story.

Before I tell you the story, I want to say that for those of you for whom English is not your first language there are a couple of things you need to know. Dr. Seuss was an American children’s author who wrote books that helped many of us learn to read, books like the *Cat in the Hat*, or *Green Eggs and Ham*, or *Hop on Pop*.

The second thing you need to know is that Dr. Seuss often made up words and made up characters. So I need you to imagine the Sneetches. Sneetches are tall yellow feather-covered creatures, walking upright on two big flat feet, with long skinny arms with feathery long fingers. They have bulbous bodies that taper up into skinny black and white striped necks, upturned beaks and on top of their little heads five or six black stringy hairs.

So while needless to say there are no such thing as sneetches, the reality as you will see is that we are all sneetches in one way or another!

James says to us this morning: “My dear friends, don’t let public opinion influence how you live out our glorious, Christ-originated faith.” (The Message)

And Dr. Seuss says this to us this morning in “The Sneetches.”

"The Sneetches"
by Dr. Seuss

<https://www.bethechangeconsulting.com/sites/default/files/worksheets/The-Sneetches.pdf>

James says to us: “You do well when you complete the Royal Rule of the Scriptures: “Love others as you love yourself.” (The Message)

And in conclusion a short folk tale that I’ve told you many times through the years:

An old rabbi once asked his students how one could recognize the time when night ends and day begins.

Is it when, from a great distance, you can tell a date palm from a fig tree, one student asked?
No, said the rabbi.

Is it when, from a great distance you can tell a dog from a sheep, another student asked?
No said the rabbi.

Then when is it, the students asked?
It is when you look into the face
Of any human creature
And see your brother or your sister there.
Until then, night is still with us.