

**“Behind the Curtain”**

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*(Scott read the book “Yertle the Turtle,” by Dr. Seuss. Dr. Seuss wrote “Yertle the Turtle” as a response to Adolph Hitler.)*

Yertle the Turtle became selfish and a megalomaniac. Yertle started having visions of grandeur, wanting to be king of all he could see. Being king of his own pond was simply not good enough. Yertle called his subjects - the other turtles - to get on top of each other, so he could be king of all he could see.

The more he saw, the more he wanted to see. It wasn't enough to be king of the turtles. It wasn't enough to be king of a cow and a mule, and a house, a blueberry bush and a cat! Yertle the king, not satisfied, put more turtle subjects on top of each other.

Notice: Yertle, does not care about his subjects suffering from back, neck and knee pain. Yertle does not realize that simply seeing a more-vast empire doesn't automatically make it yours. Yertle became so obsessed with his own power and self-aggrandizement that he resented God, and wanted to be higher than heaven itself.

But, what brought King Yertle down was not a more powerful king, but simple, plain Mack - who was part of the tower of turtles. Yertle was so busy looking up and at what he didn't have, that he didn't look down, at the responsibilities he already had. Mack burped and down came the tower of turtles, including Mack. And Yertle was king of nothing, because he landed in the mud.

I know you are wondering what in the world has Scott been doing in the pulpit for the past five minutes reading “Yertle the Turtle.” I know Jill is hoping I have an answer to this. Dr. Seuss, not long after World War II, wrote the story of “Yertle the Turtle” in a response to Adolph Hitler.

He wrote the story to explain how someone like Hitler could go from being a colonel in the German army in World War I, to becoming the most powerful dictator in World War II.

What would motivate someone to become so evil?

Yertle had visions of grandeur and he wanted to be king of all he could see. Being king of the pond was simply not good enough - nor was being “king” of a single country good enough for Adolph Hitler. Yertle called his subjects - the other turtles - on top of each other so he could be king of all he could see. He didn't care about his subjects, nor did Hitler.

It wasn't enough - it was never enough. It wasn't enough to be king of a cow, or king of a mule or a blueberry bush or a cat, and it was never enough for Adolph Hitler. Yertle did not care about his subjects' suffering. He didn't see it, because he was too self-absorbed in what he wanted and where he wanted to see. He was obsessed with power. He was obsessed with self-aggrandizement. He resented God, even wanting to be higher than the moon so he could be as high as the heavens - and that is idolatry. That is what Hitler wanted, too.

Yertle became so obsessed that he couldn't think of anything else. What took him in the end were the people he didn't care for; the responsibility for the people that were supposed to be under his care - that he used and manipulated until they could live that way no longer.

This is the same as Hitler's Nazi Germany; Hitler wanted to possess all, without taking responsibility for the people under his care. Hitler's arrogance and lack of concern was idolatry, and that is what brought Hitler down. So Dr. Seuss really does have a lot to say about power and justice and arrogance run amuck.

I think Dr. Seuss has a lot to say for ISIS as well - different name, same rulers. They, too, have no consideration for the people they are stacking one on top of the other. Stacking on top of another are suicide bombers and children going to war and brutality cutting off heads. ISIS has killed many more Muslims than Christians. They don't care about anyone or anything.

Religion isn't really what this is about. Look at how Hitler used and manipulated Christianity in Germany to get what he wanted. He knew just enough theology to manipulate. Hitler went to the church leaders and said Martin Luther talked about the two Kingdoms: that God is in control of the Heavenly Kingdom, and God has preordained leaders on earth to care for the earthly realm. "God has called me [Hitler] to be the earthly ruler, so you cannot question what God has done." And it worked. It was wrong, it was theologically bad, but it worked.

ISIS is manipulating Islam in the very same way. For Hitler it wasn't about Christianity. His motivations were totally self-absorbed into getting more and more. And Islam - that is not what ISIS is all about. ISIS is just manipulating Islam in order to get what they want - more and more and more. They just use religion as a tool and they become idolatrous.

Islam is a very monotheistic religion. In fact, they claim that Christians are not monotheistic enough, because Jesus - and the Trinity with the Holy Spirit - is not monotheistic in the eyes of the Muslim people. They point that question at us, and here is Islam - who bases the foundation of their religion on monotheisms - having this group manipulating their faith and becoming idols of their own power and their own judgment; deeming they know better than the Koran. They break the first two Jewish commandments which are also commandments - in one form or another - in the Koran: *You shall have no other Gods before me and you shall not make of yourself a graven image idol.* They are being idolatrous.

What brings this to revelation is the fact that God's wrath will have its day - not unlike Hitler - who used and manipulated Christianity. ISIS is utilizing Islam; but God says in Revelation *[He] will tear down the cosmic evil and God will do the same thing on earth.*

It is our responsibility to respond to Islam, and we must remember that we have already won the war. God will ultimately win against all forms of injustice and unjust groups of people. Now, they may win a few battles. Hitler certainly won a few battles along the way. But, Hitler did not win the war, and I believe in great part that God had a hand in the final victory of justice over evil and dictatorships. And I believe God will have the same day with ISIS.

There are moments, because I am not a pacifist, where it is important to bomb and even kill in order to stop ISIS. If I had a gun and was standing in that area where guys were shooting people at random I believe God would forgive me for shooting one of them, dead away.

We must always recognize that there is a consequence for every activity. Every time an extremist dies, they will twist the story and it will create more extremists. So, every time we drop a bomb, we must ask ourselves, is this worth the new extremists that we will make through the killing of ISIS members? At times it is fair to say, "yes"; but that should never be our only response to ISIS.

At the end of the day, it is not hatred or murder or killing that will win the war. Ultimately the war will be won through healing and wholeness. Figuring out a way. Because I don't believe this is as much about religion as I believe it's about economic equality and fairness. I think it's about a group or segment around the world, including our own country, that feels disenfranchised; who are poor and who feel they do not have a voice or freedom. They have been unduly treated unfairly and with prejudice.

So the way you win the war isn't just with bombs or guns; but more importantly it's in the community in which we live - treating Muslim people with dignity, and going out of our way to treat them with love.

I feel for the poor Muslim people who are law-abiding, faithful, caring people who are screaming as loud as they can that this is not their religion. We need to support them, and show them all the respect and the love that we can. Around the world and in our own country, we have to figure out how to bring economic viability and support so that they can become part of this world's activity and give them the opportunity to live fulfilled lives. That will be the ultimate way in which we bring Christ-like love, peace, and where the war will be won.

So when you see a Muslim woman, trying to get her kids into the grocery store, you open the door with a smile. When you see a group of people walking across the street on 42<sup>nd</sup> or down on Douglas to get across to their Islamic center, which is their place of worship, you wave and make sure they have the opportunity to get across the street safely.

If you have them in your school or in your work, you go out of your way to be supportive and loving because they are struggling right along with us. We can do that because we are without fear. We may have moments of being frightened amidst things like Paris, but our ultimate fear will subside when we know that, while we may lose a few battles here and there, we will win the war.

God brought down Pharaoh and the entire Pharaohs. God brought down all of the Caesars, knocked down their towers of wealth and military might. God brought down Hitler and God will bring down ISIS. We need to be open, prayerfully, to how we respond; to love even when we must take on extremism. We must believe that even in the most difficult moments - like a week and a half ago in Paris - they will ultimately fall in defeat, in the mud.

God bless God's power to love, as well as have power to invoke wrath, as well as forgiveness. The God of Heaven who has already destroyed evil in the cosmic war will

bring peace to our world as well. May that be our prayer, and may that be our trust and faith as we move forward; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.