

REFLECTIONS

Thoughts on nature and the Christian faith - 7/30/18

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

- James 1:19



Snails are fascinating creatures. They are hermaphrodites, which means they produce both eggs and sperm. They cannot hear, but rely almost solely on their sense of smell. They move by producing a mucus slime which allows them to move without endangering their underbellies. But their most unique attribute, the one which comes to mind when we think of snails, is their slowness. As I watched this one after I had photographed it, it managed to move about a half inch a minute. Not exactly a speed demon. Its shell, not its speed, is its defense. There are times, however, when slowness is a virtue. Christians are instructed to be slow to speak and slow to anger. Our culture today has degenerated to the point where meaningful conversation is almost impossible. Listening to debates on the radio or television is frustrating since one person cannot finish a sentence without another interrupting to make his or her point. And the tone of what we hear is far from civil. Anger, rather than polite discourse, is the norm. One would think that conversations among Christians would be different. Sadly, it often is not. Our preachers tend to yell angrily at us rather than talk gently to us, our beliefs are often mandated rather than discussed, and other points of view are dismissed rather than encouraged. Where is the gentleness, the meekness, and the loving kindness that our Lord has asked us to exhibit? Being slow to speak and slow to anger does not mean being compromising in what we believe, but it does mean that hearing must come before responding. Civility should be a hallmark of our faith. My grandmother used to say that you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. She was right. Meekness does not mean weakness. And who knows, if we really take the time to actually listen before we speak, we just might learn something. - John