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We're Having a Meeting

1 Corinthians 13:11-12

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The family and I drove to Maine over the holidays. Along the way I thought about what I would say today. After the 8-hour drive, when we arrived at my parents' house at about 10:00 in the evening, my younger brother greeted me with, "I am preparing a sermon and would like your comments on it." I would like to recognize his contributions to the ideas that I will discuss here today.

1 Corinthians 13:11-12

¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

You may be thinking of several different directions I could go with that bible passage – I'm not going in any of those directions. Let me tell you a little (mostly true) modern day parable that got me thinking about this morning's topic.

A man's boss gave him a day planner with a calendar. The man had just spent the past evening converting his 2006 calendar into a 2007 calendar by changing all of the numbers so he really did not want to use the nice new day planner. He decided to give it to his five-year-old son, Coby.

The child was quite pleased with the new day planner and asked what he would do with it. So the father told him he could take it to meetings and take notes in it and set appointments.

One afternoon shortly thereafter, the son called a family meeting. He sat down, opened up his new date-book, stared at it for a few seconds, looked up at his dad and said "Dad, what do you do at a meeting". The father explained that they could discuss things and make some decisions.

Coby said, "What kind of things can we decide?"

The dad suggested, "How about we decide that if you make your bed every day and feed the dog twice a day then, at the end of the week, I'll give you a quarter".

Coby looked up and politely said "Nope".

The dad went directly into negotiating mode and offered "2 quarters",

"Nope!",

"3 quarters?"

"let me think of it... nope",

"4 quarters, and that's my final offer",

There was a long pause and then the young child said, "Hey dad, what's a quarter?"

Hearing this story got me thinking... how close is this to my conversations with God? Am I as naïve about what God is trying to tell me as Coby was about the negotiation? And if I am, or may be, what do I do about it? I think I'm not unique in the following regard: I feel called to follow the direction that God has set for me, and I frequently find myself confused about exactly what He has in mind.

The verse from Corinthians reminds us that we don't know everything now; "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully". My first reaction is that this is a somewhat hopeless position, not only do I not know, but there is biblical reassurance that I'm not going to know, at least in this lifetime.

Unlike Coby in the story, because of our inferiority to and lack of knowledge about God, we sometimes do not know how to communicate with Him. Sometimes it is just easier to avoid this topic all together. How do you think the dad felt when the Coby surprised him with the question about the quarter? Was he angered or frustrated at the ignorance? Of course not! He was probably warmed by the naiveté and curiosity and

also looked forward to teaching the youngster something. I guess that God might take a similar view of His children.

But for some reason, it seems difficult for all of us to bring our problems and questions to God.

One reason why this is so hard for us is that we do not see clearly who we are talking to. As stated in today's New Testament passage, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face." Similarly, we do not hear clearly His answers to our prayers. Sometimes we doubt He is even listening. This is disconcerting for us all. This is hard.

And in the Old Testament passage from Micah, Micah appears to be desperate in his pleas to God asking what he should do. ... Should I come before Him with burnt offerings... with calves a year old? With thousands of rams? With ten thousand rivers of oil? Maybe Micah thinks that if he offers God multiple-choice questions he may get a more conventional and direct reply.

But Micah found a bit more clarity and shared it with us to help us. I think we should study Micah 6:8 like we study the Ten Commandments.

"What He requires us to do is this: to act justly, to love kindness, and to live in humble fellowship with our God."

We need to have a certain childlike humility to go to God with questions. We should be able to ask the God the simple question that we think we should already know the answer to, like, "God, What is 'acting justly'?", "God, what is 'loving kindness'?". When we ask God these simple questions, when we put our problems in His hands, we are "Walking humbly with our God."

I would like everyone to close there eyes right now and just say to yourself, "God, What does it mean to 'Love Kindness'?"

I will guess that many of you got some form of an answer right now. I know when I experimented with this at home I got several answers. I thought of my daughter, I

thought of my wife, I thought of what I could do in the community, etc. But you know what, I would not have received these answers had I not asked the question.

And for those of you that may not have got an answer to the question right here and now, it is likely that one will come to you later today.

The point to this little exercise is that we need to take our problems to God.

Pause

One day a man that was prominent member of the community and known throughout the community as a devout Christian, I guess analogous to a modern day Job, went to the barber. The atheist barber cut his hair while all the time challenging the customer's beliefs. The barber questioned: How can there be a God with all of the troubles in the world? With suicides, drug abuse, murder, wars, and all the problems of the world.

The Christian was burning up inside but could put together a polite comeback and felt that no matter what he said it would fall on deaf ears.

He sat in the chair and endured the monologue, then, when he was finished he paid the barber and gave him a nice tip. The barber gave a closing sentence to his speech, kind of confirming it for himself; his last word were, "I don't believe that God exists" As soon as the man left the shop he saw a long haired, bearded, disheveled man strolling down the sidewalk toward the barber shop. Before the door to barber shop even closed he re-entered and said, "I do not believe *barbers* exist!"

The barber said, "How can you not believe that barbers exist? The evidence is right in front of your face. I cut your hair and you paid me for it; you even gave me a nice tip. It is obvious that *barbers exist!*"

By this time the long-haired man had strolled right in front of the large window of the barber shop and the Christian customer said, "Then how do you explain this long-haired man just outside your window?"

The barber snapped back: “Oh, barbers exist for sure, it is just that some people choose not to go to them often enough.”

When we come to God and ask him questions that we maybe even should be able to figure out ourselves and are receptive to learning, then, as Micah states we should do, we are ‘walking humbly with our God.’ If pride and arrogance stand in the way of our open communication then we are limited in what we can learn.

We are God’s children and like Coby, we need to try to better understand.

There are lots of ways to over-complicate your life, to over-analyze things, and to completely frustrate yourself trying to figure out all the details. But, what is really required: Act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. I find this very comforting and I think I kind of arrived there before I discovered this particular verse. So, I thought of it more in terms of “in all this confusion, am I treating people well, do my actions sit okay with me – on reflection, and am I acting on principle and not on pride?”

So, let me conclude with this, I think it’s helpful to be in constant pursuit of our purpose and to try to figure out all the details. However there is no Christian obligation to figure out all of the answers; and actually our Christian obligation is to recognize that we do not and will not have all of the answers. There is a lot of peace to be found in the realization that what is required is to act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.

Let us pray: God, help us to pray more often and hear our prayers. Amen