

Connecting with God

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There are places and moments where our connectivity to God is readily apparent. Perhaps it comes when watching stars at night, or swimming at sunrise, or sitting in your backyard listening to the wind on a nice spring day, or just by having a conversation with a friend. These connections provide us with hope, contentment, unification, a higher level of self-awareness, and a feeling very spiritual to us. It is always hard to leave these moments where we feel connected, because we worry that as our lives change, and as we move on to something new, our connection that we had in that moment will somehow be weakened by the passage of time.

It is always hard for me to leave Washington Island, a place I vacation with family and friends every year.

Washington Island is a place that seems undisturbed by time and when you're there, you forget your strict schedules and transfer over into what they call "island time."

You let yourself go, and do what comes naturally. I walk barefoot up there a lot.

You may not believe what I'm about to say, but one of my favorite parts about the island is that there's no cell phone reception. And while I'm there I do like to meet up with my friends who stay on the opposite side, so you'd think the convenience of texting would be welcome. But instead of worrying about texting each other plans, we just kind of meet up, almost by chance, but it happens so fluidly and perfectly that it doesn't feel like it.

We swim, ride bikes, go on walks through the woods, watch sunsets, stare at stars from the mountain tower, and make fires by the lake. Natural, fun, easy things.

The island has become a very spiritual place for me. And it is hard leaving some place so spiritual, and once I leave, I immediately start thinking about my next trip back next year.

And the thing is, I've always come back next year. So I've come to learn to rely on the island as a place where I can feel connected with God, the spirit, and myself.

But sometimes we can't rely on things to be the same next year.

Many of the rituals and traditions, in which, we've come accustomed to finding God, either won't be the same in the future, or won't be there at all.

We all go through some extreme change. We are constantly cycling through ends of eras and finding ourselves in places and situations utterly new to us.

God challenges us to maintain a sense of selfhood and connection with him as we transfer away from the old and comfortable, into the new and sometimes intimidating.

It can be hard to keep ourselves together with ever-occurring change, especially when the change is as drastic as it is sometimes. David Hume even argues that “We have no substantial self with which we are identical.”

Or – we have nothing in us that is the same over time, making personal identity a fiction.

All we know are sensory impressions, and these constantly change. *He argues that since there is no separate impression of the self which we experience, then there is no reason to believe we have a self at all.*

It can be compared to one of the flip books, where when you turn through the pages really fast, it appears that a single bird is flying in and out of a single cage. But when you look at it closely, you see that your first sensory impressions were wrong and it's actually a different bird and a different cage on every page, *in perpetual flux and movement*.

But Hume must not have read John 14. Jesus said: “[God] will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth... You know him because he abides with you and he will be in you.”

God gives us the spirit to sustain ourselves forever. It is the quality that is actually *within* us that Hume missed.

It is not a sensory perception, but a God or a faith perception.

Jesus said “the world will no longer see me, but you will see me.”

It is those real, personal and communal moments of connectivity with the spirit which maintain us. We worry that as our lives change, those moments where we feel connected with God will go away. But God is telling us that this is impossible. We are always connected to him. Jesus said “I will not leave you orphaned, I am coming to you.”

As we move on through our lives we must live according to the spirit. For it is the “Holy Spirit, who will teach us everything and remind us of what Jesus said to us.”

As we look upon our world, it does not seem as though we have been living according to the spirit. Only 4% of our country’s original forests remain,

water from aquifers is being used up faster than it can be replenished,

we are spending more money than we can pay back, and have just reached our debt ceiling.

We are not living sustainably, and we are not living according to the spirit, *or* God's commandments.

As God looks upon the world, it must seem as if we don't love him. It reads:

“Those who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me.”

As a society we have been overtaken by greed and have not always shown our love for God.

As we enter this new generation, let's live according to the spirit and build our society on the commandments and God's love.

Pastor Modahl said in a sermon a few weeks ago, that the spirit will always lead us back to God. This is indeed true.

And living according to the spirit of truth – will direct us towards living according to God’s commandments – and keeping God’s commandments will show God we love him,

And then he will reveal himself to us.

We read reveal himself to us to be the final victory. God’s love proving triumphant. But we cannot get there unless we live with the spirit. So as we move on into the new generation, lets acknowledge that the spirit is a real force that abides in us. It is not a delusion. It is something real, which promotes a Godly life. It we live according to the spirit we will show God we love him, and through his love we will see him reveal himself to us, and accomplish the ultimate victory of eternal life.

If I could only get one thing across to you with this sermon, my senior classmates, and the rest of the congregation, it would be

that the Holy Spirit is real. Very real. You can feel it all around.

And Living with the spirit, means living with love, and there is no fate that cannot be surmounted by love.