

Smoky Mountain Reflections, July 2012

Communication.....an amazing way God has given us to relay information from one person to another. The giving or exchanging and/or receiving of information and ideas, which comes in many different forms, some trustworthy and some suspect. We advise, announce, articulate, assert, commune, commiserate, connect, contact, converse, correspond, declare, deliver, disclose, disseminate, elucidate, express, link, mention, notify, publish, read, receive, reveal, talk, tell, transfer, translate, transmit, utter, and write so many things..... that our world is full of information noise and we often end up filtering more than we receive, sometimes even filtering very important information while spending long periods of time on mindless empty information just to take a break from all that endless information....

We have become so good at communicating that we have developed lots of ways to communicate without even ever having to see or talk to each other. This long list of things which are designed to connect us often ends up sending us farther apart. I write this reflection and it appears in about 90 printed paper newsletters. It is also available in color at our church website. I also post it on my blog while e-mailing a link to this blog to over 300 people and posting a link on Facebook as well. I am sure that one day you will be able to write something and have it call everyone you want it to, and have it read to them on the phone or some mobile device. Many books these days are available in audio form, read aloud by the author or a professional and pleasing foreign voice. By my estimation, the different methods I use to send out this article give at least 1500 to 2000 people the direct opportunity to ignore it. Not to mention the multiple thousands that can ignore it online or if it appears in our local newspaper. I am of course not complaining because I am sure that at least a dozen or so people give of their time to read over the words I so carefully and humbly put together. And if where two or more are gathered is good enough for God to be present, how can I complain when dozens take time to ponder my words.

I once read a comparison that noted that in the late 1800's, a person would process in one year the same amount of information most Americans process in a single day. How much we process and how well depends heavily on numbers. They are a big part of how we communicate. We see them on our favorite sports player's jersey or race car driver's car. This is so we will know who is being discussed in conversation about the sport. Numbers streamline and manage our world of communication. Phone #s, Social Security #s, Zip #s, P.O. box #s, street #s, not to mention that all of our electronic communications are all just 1s and 0s. You may have noticed some symbols there as well (#)—numbers, symbols, words, phones, computers, newspapers, books, letters—all an amazing list of complex tools God gave us to communicate.

But with all these great ways to communicate...are we drifting farther apart? Are all these great methods and processes bringing us closer together...or driving us farther apart? We do not have time for or make time for sitting down over a cup of coffee (or your favorite beverage). We do not have time for or make time for actually being physically present to visit that sick or lonely friend or family member. We do not have time for or make time for a brief note, card, letter, e-mail, text or post to remember a friend or family member on a day when they need to be remembered. We do not have time for or make time for the niceties of etiquette in e-mails or text...saying hello, or sincerely yours...take time that could be better spent shooting off a dozen other short encrypted messages. Is it possible that this 50-year old man laments some of the things that our society once held very important and now does not have time to waste on? Well yes, but I too benefit from all the conveniences that high-speed abbreviated communication gives me...more time to spend on mediocre articles that some people might read :-), more time to spend with my loved ones, being together, being family as best we can, with God's help in this fast-paced world.

The most important piece of communication that exists comes from God. He gives it to us in clear expressions of truth in His word, in His word rightly proclaimed, and in His sacraments rightly administered. The amazing clear and lucid nature of scripture shows just how much he loves communicating with us. There is no debate on what God's word says, only on how we apply His truth, or in some circles, if it even is truth. This much is sure—God loves us so much that He gave His only begotten son for us. When this reality is communicated to us through the Holy Spirit, we crave communication with Him in worship, reading of His word and direct personal communication...prayer.

Slow down and be selective in what you process. Take time to communicate with God today. Lay on Him all your worries and concerns, thank Him for all that is good in your life, and ask Him for help to deal with all that is grievous or painful. He is with you. He will answer. Trust the love He has communicated to you in word and deed.

In Christ,
Pastor Portier