

“Knowing Where to Look”

Job 33:14-28 • 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • July 31, 2016

Where is God? God, where are you? Anybody ever feel like that? Do you ever feel like God just isn't around? It's an election year. If you're like me you probably feel that way a lot! So let me ask you: How DO we go about finding God? I think the key is knowing where to look.

No doubt by now you have heard of the newest electronic game for smartphones. It's called Pokémon Go. The game was just released about 3 weeks ago and there are already around 25 million people in the US playing, making it the most popular mobile game ever. So for those of you not familiar with this game, let me bring you up to speed. Pokémon Go is an app that you load onto your smart phone. The way the game works is that it uses the GPS feature of your phone to track your location. The game shows you a map of where you are. The object is to walk around and capture little creatures called “pocket monsters,” which is where the game gets its name.

There are over 150 of these Pokémon that you are supposed to catch and the slogan is “Gotta catch 'em all.” What makes this game unique is the technology that it uses to let you interact with the world around you. This technology is called “augmented reality.” In addition to using the GPS and map feature to connect the game with the world around you, it also uses the camera in your phone for additional realism. In a moment I'll show you what I mean.

The premise of the game is that the Pokémon that you are trying to collect are all over and you never know when or where one will show up. Take a look at a couple that showed up here in the office. The idea is that they are all around us but you can't “see” them without the game on your phone.

It occurred to me that this is what the Apostle Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 4. In verse 18 he says, “we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the

things that are unseen are eternal.” Obviously he's not talking about pocket monsters. He's talking about the reality of God that is all around us but too often we miss because we're not looking. God is not going to force himself on you and so sometimes His presence is not obvious. In fact, as I said, sometimes it feels like God is nowhere to be found. But you have to know where to look. This is what Job's friend Elihu was saying in our Old Testament reading. “For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it.”

The Bible is clear that the way we “see” God is by faith. Hebrews 11 is all about this kind of faith. “Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things *not seen*.” The rest of Hebrews 11 gives us examples of people in the Old Testament who lived with that kind of faith, a faith that trusts in God's promises, even when it seems like He is not where to be found.

So what is it that we “see” by faith? According to verse 4, we see “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” What we “see” by faith is that Jesus truly is God, the God who created and sustains the world. This is a hard concept for many people to accept. Sometimes you will hear people object to Christianity as being too exclusive. They say something like, “How can you say that Jesus is the only way to God? Aren't other people's paths to God equally valid?” Once you understand that Jesus IS God, you discover how absurd the argument is.

One day Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” They gave several different answers. But then he asked, “Who do YOU say that I am?” That's the question that every one of us must find the answer to. Peter said, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” And then Jesus said, “Blessed are you Simon. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven.” Whenever any of us comes to understand who Jesus is we realize that it's the work of God the Holy Spirit. Verse 6 of our passage today puts it

like this: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” If you believe that, you don’t have to wonder where God is. He’s right there shining in your heart.

In the Pokémon Go game, in order to catch the monsters you need certain supplies, which are available at places called Pokéstops. The supplies are free but you have to be within a certain distance in order to get them. It seems fitting to me that many of the stops are at churches, including ours. There are actually two Pokéstops here at the church, one in front by the historical marker and the other out by the sign in the parking lot. You can’t play very long without visiting a Pokéstop.

Faith works the same way. After God opens your eyes, your faith needs certain “tools” in order to grow and flourish. So what are those tools? Probably the most important is worship. Paul writes in verse 15: “as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.” That’s worship. Worship is glorifying and thanking God. Without regular times of worship your

faith will become weak. When things get difficult you stop seeing Jesus. Paul says we have this treasure in jars of clay. We will face difficulties. We need the tools of faith, especially worship, to get us through with our faith intact.

Other tools of faith that help us to “see” Jesus are reading the Bible, praying, and spending intentional time with other Christians. And that’s why the church exists – to teach you and help you engage in those practices.

So how do you see God? You come to church. You worship passionately. You get together with other believers to pray together, to study the Bible together, but also to have fun together. When you are experiencing that kind of life, you will not lose heart because even when things are tough you discover that God is preparing you for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as you look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen and eternal, the things that are way better than Pokémon.

Amen.