

United Methodist Church of Monroe  
Monroe, CT  
March 4, 2017  
10:00 a.m. Service

“The Gift of Uncertainty”

Text: 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:1-13

Uncertainty. How can uncertainty be a gift? Usually uncertainty comes because of facing some big decision. If it affects others we can agonize over the right choice. Sometimes it can actually drive us into doing nothing because of the worries of choosing one over another; what if I choose that and then this happens...So most people see uncertainty as a curse, or as a weakness as they think to themselves “why can’t I seem to make a decision?” When you can’t see the end of your journey it can be downright scary to take a step on one path rather than another.

You might be thinking that scripture read was quite familiar, like didn’t we just have that in worship a couple of weeks ago? Yes, at that point I focused on the love portion. Today I want you to consider these words:

*Says Paul, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.”*

Children actually enjoy a small level of uncertainty as they begin to explore their world. But not always, they like routine and they like to know that when I do this, that happens. They also like to be prepared and do not like when things get switched up. If Dad always picks up on Thursdays and takes you to the park look out if Dad is away and Grandma comes and doesn’t bring you to the park.

I’ve always thought that the word “dimly” that Paul uses here is like a clouded mirror, that you can only make out certain things. However, the Greek root word that “dimly” comes from is actually translated more to mean an “enigma.” An enigma is something that is hard to understand, puzzling, not at all how I envisioned what Paul was saying. Paul is telling us that as we mature in our faith we should look forward to the enigmas. As the author of the book I’m basing our worship series on, *The Gift of the Dark Wood*, Eric Elnes says Paul is telling us that “a mature faith is one that embraces life as a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved—that accepts uncertainty as a gift, not a curse.”

Brother Steindl-Rast is a Catholic Benedictine monk, notable for his active participation in interfaith dialogue and his work on the interaction between spirituality and science. He says: *“You are like Rilke’s Swan in his awkward waddling across the ground; the swan doesn’t cure his awkwardness by beating himself on the back, by moving faster, or by trying to organize himself better. He does it by moving toward the elemental water, where he belongs. It is the simple*

*contact with the water that gives him grace and presence. You only have to touch the elemental waters in your own life, and it will transform everything. But you have to let yourself down into those waters from the ground on which you stand, and that can be hard. Particularly if you think you might drown. . . . Let go of all this effort, and let yourself down, however awkwardly, into the waters."*

Each week I invite you to take time to reflect during the week on the gift that is lifted up on Sunday. I will close with one of my favorite quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr.: *"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."*

I pray that during this Lenten season you may embrace uncertainty and discover the gifts it has in store for you.

Amen.