



Minding the Gap – January 2018

A Faith and Work Publication

Welcome to *Minding the Gap*, a monthly thought about faith in the workplace!

"A Basis for Hope"

I love to play the sport of handball (basically racquetball without the racquet) and I've played it for 50+ years. I play at the YMCA and every January we have a hard time finding a place to park. The reason - a 'boatload' of people starting off the New Year in **hopes** of improving their physical and mental health. Unfortunately, by the middle of February we no longer struggle to find a place to park. This **hope** is a great **hope** but sadly put in a fragile place - our own desire or determination.

I believe we have similar experiences with **hope** at our places of work where we begin the year with expectations that it will be a better year where: 'Sam will complete his strategic plan'; 'the new service plan will be put into effect'; 'Char will be more receptive to my suggestions for efficiency'; and 'Ralf will begin completing his assigned tasks on time'. And on-and-on they go, only to be met with disappointment and even growing frustration. Sound familiar? Perhaps we are putting our hopes in a low-return "fund". Yes, you guessed the obvious response - "our *hope is in Christ* and not things of the world"; and yet, it really is the truth.

In Advent, we heard a series of messages around joy, peace, hope and love. The message on **hope** was quite meaningful to me in that it directed our

source of hope to the character of God, as we know it in Christ "we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God."(Rom5:3). This was telling me the true elements of hope are evidenced in God and we clearly see them in Christ. Actually those elements are put down in Exodus 34:6ff where God passes in front of Moses and describes him/herself. As Richard Rohr states: "The God that Israel discovered and that Jesus incarnated was **merciful, gracious, faithful, forgiving,** and forever **steadfast in love**". So, here we have the distinct alternative to the hopes at work described above.

Not that those hopes are misplaced or wrong - they have worth, but they need to be brought into balance with the qualities, which we find in Christ. It seems important to remember the behaviors of mercy, grace, faith, forgiveness and unchanging love are more about **who we are**; rather than, **what we do** or accomplish. This is a very challenging and artful assignment because every one of these *five qualities* must be displayed in the context of accountability for getting things done. So, again it is not a matter of either/or but of **both/and**. For this artful balance we begin with the words: "May your Spirit, Jesus, be my guide in this day". Blessings!

- Jim Grubs

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