



Minding the Gap – October 2018

A Faith and Work Publication

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

Faith in the Face of Doubt

A couple of weeks ago Joel Vander Wal, pastor at Incarnation Lutheran, gave a message from Mark 9 in which a desperate father comes to Jesus for the healing of his son who probably had epilepsy or something similar. The father asked Jesus's disciples to help but their efforts of healing were ineffective. His further request for Jesus's help was **filled with doubt**--"if you're able..." This story illustrates what nearly all of us have experienced in our efforts to be faithful to how God would have us think and behave. We act in faith to do what we believe to be right or good; it doesn't go well; so we end up frustrated and wondering where God is, and in extreme circumstances even if God exists. **Doubt** enters in just as it did with this father when the disciples failed to heal and the dad questions Jesus's power to heal - again, "if you are able".

In one of my work experiences, I had to bring the unfortunate message of an employee's dismissal to him. Because of a lingering illness, this employee had been away for a number weeks. In an effort to respect his dignity, I thought speaking to him directly would be best and decided to go to his home rather than calling or sending an email. This was a HUGE mistake. His words were..."I

feel like I've been ambushed in the privacy of my home". As I thought about it later, I understood his feelings. My intent was not to "ambush" him but rather to show respect for his sacredness and compassion for his situation. I believed I was being intentionally faithful to one of Jesus's teachings - "*If your brother sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone.*" (Matt 18:15). I had moved forward in **faith** to do what is right and good and it backfired. A person doesn't need to have very many of these experiences to begin **doubting** the **certainty** of her/his **faith**. It clearly illustrates the axiom "*the opposite of faith is not doubt but rather certainty*", - and perhaps helps to understand the nature of faith.

In our employment settings as we act in faith to Jesus's teachings, we are often doing so in *uncharted territory*. **Uncharted** because accepted values such as **power, competence, status, correctness** are a hundred-eighty degrees from **service, vulnerability, humility** and **compassion**. Our position of following Christ's example puts us in a "wilderness" where there are no established paths, but only a guiding beacon of conviction, a sense within our faith that who we are and what we are doing is right. Joel insightfully made the point - there are no guarantees that if we enact the values and principles of the Gospel all will end well. Fairness and justice are not always the victors, but our God is a God whose sovereign qualities are those of **grace and compassion**. Know that God will not abandon you but "*lift you up and carry you*" within those qualities.

Blessings!

Jim Grubs

 Incarnation Lutheran Church

4880 Hodgson Road, Shoreview, MN 55126