

ADD IT TO THE LIST
I Corinthians 13: 1-13 –First Sunday of Lent –February 26, 2012
The Church of the Covenant

“*Why God, why?*” In my study, under lock and key, in a manila file folder is a list. Perhaps as a pastor I shouldn’t admit this but I have a list of all the things that have happened during the course of my ministry that I do not understand, that I cannot explain, for which I can see no explanation if indeed there is a loving God. It is the list of things about which one day I will ask God personally. Hardly a year goes by where I do not add items to the list. And when I find myself asking the Good Lord in prayer, “*Why God, why?*”. I finally get to the place where I say to myself: “Add it to the list...”

The list is long. It contains items such as these:

- *The wonderful young woman who was killed tragically and accidentally two months before her wedding; I did her funeral instead of her wedding...*
- *The magnificent preacher who developed throat cancer and can no longer preach...*
- *The crib death of an only child of a couple in their 40’s who can have no more children...*
- *The brilliant well-read woman with the incisive mind who develops Alzheimer’s...*
- *The intelligent student at the Ivy League school, captain of the tennis team, who sustained a closed head injury and became little more than a vegetable at age 19...*
- *The Lockerbie Scotland airplane bombing that killed an active elder and youth leader in a former church...*
- *My best friend from Michigan who died at age 47 leaving behind a wife and two little girls...*
- *The death of our dear Associate Pastor, Randy Boyer, at the very beginning of his ministry, just three years after having been ordained as a Presbyterian Minister...*

Why God, why? And then I add it to the list. And these are just a few items on the list. I have seen people and their faith in God destroyed by such happenstance in their life. I have spoken with enough people to know the question is always, “**Why?**” “I have trusted You, Lord, my whole life. I have tried to be a good person. Lord, I have always believed in Your goodness and Your mercy. *Why this? Why now? Why my loved one? Why now?*”

Our scripture lesson is often described as the love passage; the Apostle Paul at his best describing a love that “*never ends*”, a love that is “*patient and kind*”, a love that is a divine love that comes from God and that we have experienced in and through the living presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. “*Faith, hope, love abide; these three. But the greatest of these is love.*” (I Corinthians 13: 1-13) The young woman killed right before her wedding day was buried in her wedding dress and her fiancée requested that the Bible verses they had chosen for their wedding instead be read at her funeral. The 800 people wept as I read I Corinthians 13. And I said: “Our love can be crushed and

feel dead by circumstance in life but God's love for us can never die." The question: "Why God, why?" is answered only in part: "*Love never ends.*"

But only in part. Because the part of this scripture that we forget begins: "*For now we see in a mirror dimly...*" For now we are looking into the mirror of life and all feels obscured and hidden and unknown. We do not know. We cannot answer the question, "Why?". Paul then writes: "*Now I know in part, then I shall understand fully even as I have been fully understood.*" (I Corinthians 13:12) Paul is reminding us, O beloved, there is a time when all is understood and all is known. There is a time when the dim and dark glass of this life is wiped clean and we see clearly and we understand what we could never hope to understand in this life. There is a time and a place where the question "why?" is finally and fully answered and we finally and fully understand that "*love never ends*".

We shall see the Lord, as it says, "*face-to-face*" (v. 12). There will be no barriers of unknowing. "Face-to-face" in the Bible means being in close, personal relationship; the dividing walls are down; we can look into the very face of God, into the loving eyes of Jesus, as He weeps His tears for the pain of our life, and all is understood and all is answered and the list, the list is explained. Mere words will not suffice. *We shall see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* And in that instant...we shall know...

Maybe there is something you need to add to the list, in faith and in trust to await that day when Jesus shall look into your eyes and answer the question, "Why?" Add it to the list. Await the day when we shall know and understand even as we are known and are understood. Add it to the list. Put it in the folder. Keep it under lock and key.

But, beloved, there is another list; this one a far, far, far longer one. The one list of life's imponderable questions is short...but the list of God's unmerited grace is far, far longer. We have received blessing upon blessing through the life and ministry of Randy Boyer, too many things to list, let alone remember. He encouraged us by his heroic struggle. He showed us how to live. He showed us how to die. He showed us how to live while dying and he showed us how to die and to live for all eternity. Story upon story, too numerous to list, grace filled memories of the difference he made with his life. Why Lord, why have You blessed us so through the too short ministry of this one man? This second list is the listing of God's eternal love to His people. Why would You love us so, Lord, when we do not deserve it? Why have You intervened so many times in our lives and so often when we did not even know it? Why did You give Randy the gracious gift of life from 1994 when he was originally diagnosed up until last week? And then why have You granted Him eternal life and the promise that we shall see him again one day, in a better place and on a brighter shore, where there is no more pain and no more cancer and every tear is wiped away from our eyes? Why Lord, why? Add it to the list and one day, one day we will understand...

The Son of God dying on the cross to take away the pain and the sins of this world. It makes no sense at all. Blood and body; Bane and blessing...by the cross are sanctified. Coming into the living presence of One who was dead but now is alive forevermore. Jesus is present, his suffering is present, his death is made real. He is here. The Lord is

in this room. He has come to see us face-to-face. He has come to wipe just a bit of grime from the dark glass that is life. He has come to touch our heart, to be known and to know, to be understood and to understand. Today, beloved, we can look into the eyes of Jesus, see him face-to-face, and get a glimpse of what one day, one day, one glorious day shall be. A foretaste of a day when the books are opened, and our lists are read, where we understand even as we are understood, and the answer to every “why?” is found in a love that will never leave us nor forsake us, in a Savior who will never let go of our hand, and in a love that never ends...

Oh, and by the way, Lord, why did You send Your only begotten Son, the One You love with all the deepest passion of Your divine love, why did You send Your only child, Jesus, to suffer and to die, to be bruised and abused, to be mocked and humiliated –why did You send the One You love most to the cross-- to save us from ourselves and deliver us to new life and to heaven? Why, Lord, why????????????????????????????????

Add it to the list. Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*