



Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, He Said - She Said is a venue to share differing perspectives.

Coping

Bob's Perspective:

Every now and then we happen upon a stretch of time when we're hit by one or several circumstances that try our emotional wellbeing. These events can range from the anniversary of the death of a friend or loved one (or some other significant date), the loss of (or change of) an employment situation, moving from one domicile to the next, or some other change or loss in our lives. It's easy to get caught up in emotions – especially negative emotions.

It should be said that grieving and sadness are important and necessary components of a healthy and balanced psyche. As I've mentioned many times, one can't truly appreciate happy times if they never allow themselves to be open to experience sad times. The remarkable beauty of a sunrise takes place in the first few moments that light breaches the darkness of the night. But then, the day goes on, and by evening we're ready to rest and so we have a magnificent sunset which gently leads us to darkness. "Evening came and morning followed..." yep, it's been happening for a while now, and then it starts all over again.

Many times, it's not the big events that "get us" as much as the little surprises – those that catch us when we least expect them. Recently, I was feeling a little blue and decided to visit a place that I hadn't been to in a couple years. The place is a state park with a reservoir and a quaint livery with a porch overlooking the water and a little tackle store – about a forty-five minute drive from my home. Many times over the years, I would rent a rowboat and enjoy the peacefulness and serenity of the surroundings as I circumnavigated the waters. After rowing the boat back to shore, I'd sit up on the porch of the livery, and have a hot dog and a can of pop while conversing with some of the locals about fishing, sports or local happenings.

[\(Click here for an earworm.\)](#)

So that being said, I took a drive up to the state park to enjoy some relaxing time. As I drove, I thought back to all of the nice times I spent there, the people I met and some of the conversations that took place. I couldn't wait to get there. I finally arrived at the destination, only to find that the livery was no longer there. It had been torn down. All that remained were a couple empty docks. For a moment, my heart sank. I got out of the car and walked around, aimlessly surveying



the empty space where the wonderful livery had stood. It might have not been so bad if the livery had just closed...but none of it was even there to lament. It was almost as if it had never even existed. I got back in the car and drove away feeling empty. That place had been there since I was a kid – and now it was gone. So now what?

I drove down some of the country roads, heading back toward home. Since my whole plan hinged on the state park, I was now in a quandary as to how the rest of my day would be spent. I was feeling a little sad and melancholy. So I thought, “What I need right now is an adventure!”

With that, I decided to do some hiking. I found myself at a park reservation that I had visited a number of times before. I got out of the car, chose a path and I was on my way. I came upon a little side trail that I didn’t remember seeing in past visits.

“So what the heck, let’s take a look.” The path became more and more difficult as I proceeded. At one point, I came to a very steep hill. I was able edge my way down into a ravine. Once at the bottom, I looked back up. It was obvious to me that I couldn’t return in that direction. I continued on, crossing a small stream a couple times and wondering how I was going to get out of here. It was actually kind of funny – and seemed metaphorical in some ways to my livery experience. (I can’t go back...so what will it be now? No place to go but forward.) At a couple points, I actually found myself laughing and having a good, albeit scary, time. No place to go but forward. I walked for a good while and finally came out of the woods by a road and gas station that I recognized – about 4 miles or so from where I had started.

I went into the gas station to get a can of pop and to figure out how I was going to get back to my car. It was getting late and would be dark soon. As it happened, a police officer pulled into the station for some gas. I approached him and said, “Excuse me, Sir. I was in the park and got a little lost...” Before I could finish my sentence, he laughed and said, “Oh, another one!” With that, he invited me to pile into the cruiser and he drove me back. Apparently, this wasn’t an isolated incident.

After getting back to my car I drove toward home and stopped by Lake Erie, just in time to see the tail end of the sunset.

What a great day!



Coping is about finding the enjoyment of life from within. Things aren't always going to be the same. Things are sometimes going to be sad. The idea is to look at life as an adventure rather than a drudgery. Many times, we can't go back, so here's to looking forward!

(I'm sure you can see this one coming, so if you're not in need of another earworm, don't [click here](#).)

Mary's Perspective:

Our conversations of late, prompting this blog, have revolved around how many folks we know who are struggling daily to stay motivated, engaged, and happy on their journey – ourselves included, sometimes. A dear friend and co-worker used to tell me, “Don't worry, honey, you get this way every year. Go to your convention, go away, just take some time, and it will fix you. It always does!” I suppose she was right. I get restless in the “in between” times – when Easter turns to Ordinary Time, choir season typically concludes, and the academic year gives way to the luxury of summer. While I love this time, I get distracted from the path. And though I would never admit that I thrive on routine, I will acknowledge that, just maybe, Bob's Yoda-like wisdom of embracing ritual may, indeed, have merit. Even when it feels like we are just going through the motions.

There have been some key words that have propelled our writing over the past year, and June's thought was VISION. As in, one doesn't know where one is headed without clear vision. (I'm resisting the urge to comment on Bob's hike right now.) The challenge to accomplishing your vision is that it's easy to get distracted. If we're not “all-in” (see [our previous blog](#)), focused forward, resisting the urge to look back or go back, then the vision doesn't become reality. Scripture reminds us of this. Remember, when Jesus called the apostles, many of them initially responded, “I'll get there, but first let me...” And Jesus basically said, “just drop that and follow. Don't worry about ‘stuff’ – it will take care of itself. Pay attention!”

Even in the Old Testament, we get the same message. In [last Sunday's first reading](#), Elijah is calling Elisha to be a prophet and successor. Elisha's response? Okay, but first let me go back and talk to my parents. Ultimately, what did Elisha do? Not only did he leave his old way to follow Elijah, he got rid of the yoke of oxen – the animals and the equipment that were his livelihood – so there was no turning back. He got rid of the distractions so that he could focus on the vision.

As a member of a faith community, it would be easy to get bogged down in the statistics of church attendance, participation, and financial ramifications. As a Church minister, it would be even easier to become frustrated, demoralized, or depressed with what, at times, feels like an inevitable decline. When the negative feels palpable, sometimes the best resource is to immerse oneself in the positive.



Articulating reminders of *why* we do *what* we do can, at times, offer a healing balm to the negativity that threatens to engulf us. Entrusting the Spirit to take an active role in inspiring positivity is key to truly making a difference – in ministry and in life.

A little more than a year ago, we felt the need to actively combat the deluge of negativity that surrounded the world's experience of the Covid-19 pandemic. *Sustaining the Journey* began sending out weekly inspirations – dubbed “[Two for Tuesday](#)” – to anyone who requested them. It felt like a small act, but it created a ripple effect of good. What we initially thought might last a month or two was so well received (and requested) that it has become a regular part of our writing schedule, propelling a journey of self-discovery and mindful growth.

The reality is, life doesn't always go the way we planned. And the hard parts can be...well...hard. So how do we accommodate the disappointments and frustrations that inevitably occur, and not give in to apathy? How do we cope?

I don't know about you, but here are some ways that help me:

- Giving myself time for continuing education, vacation, inspiration, and the opportunity to dream provides healing for my sometimes-wounded spirit. Summer is an ideal time to indulge in these endeavors.
- Long walks in the park encourage me to focus on the vision – though I definitely recommend walking with a buddy or having GPS with you. (For the record, Bob was alone on his aforementioned hike, until the kindly police officer graciously gave him a ride.)
- Consistency helps me, including regular prayer, predictable eating and sleep patterns, and intentionally seeking the positive. It's not always easy, but it's worth the effort.
- Sometimes, if I'm feeling particularly dejected, I allow myself time to wallow. But I make sure to set a limit. For example, I'll cry in my tea – be sad, throw things, yell, whatever it takes – until 7pm. Then at 7, I'll read my book, or cross stitch, or watch a favorite program on television. I allow for the emotion, but I give the distraction a time limit.
- I consciously appreciate the relationships in my life. It's hard to be sad when you're with the buddy who always makes you laugh. Who can resist an affectionate nuzzle from your four-legged friend, or a hug from your offspring? Even commiserating with a co-worker helps, as they share the burdens and remind me of the joys. While alone time has its appeal, the relationships in life lift the soul.



There's no denying that we have been through some tough times recently, and "the new normal" may feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or unfocused. Like Bob said, coping is about finding the enjoyment of life from within. We have long days, warm weather, and a break from some of our usual commitments over these couple of months. It's the perfect opportunity to climb out of your funk and hone your vision. I challenge you: take this time to find the best ways you can cope, get rid of the distractions, and focus on moving forward intentionally. Where will your path lead?