

When Debbie kindly agreed to lead service for me, I was incredibly grateful. The first thing that I thought about was what scripture we should have for this service. I did not want to use any scripture with a lot of difficult words and I really did not want to write a sermon for her to read that was about something she didn't feel comfortable speaking about.

So, I decided to ask her if there was a specific scripture that she wanted read or a topic that she wanted to discuss. She asked me to pick out a scripture that reminded me about my uncle. There are so many scripture lessons that remind me about my Uncle Ken. How can you summarize one person's life into one reading?

You can't, just like you can't define him in one word. Or at least I can't. When I think about him, I am reminded about so many different descriptives: father, grandfather, husband, brother, uncle, son, fisherman, artist, leader. He was so many different things to so many people.

My uncle was a good artist and had won many awards for his work. To be honest, I didn't understand some of it, especially when I was younger. He made miniature scale versions of different chairs and put them on different floorings. But, his artwork that I most associate with him is a wooden placard with the words, "MOOSE DON'T BOUNCE LIKE DEER" printed on it. He had given it to my parents as a gift. One day, I asked him what it meant.

You see, we were visiting him and my Aunt Sarah. They had just moved to Wisconsin from New York and it was the first time that we got to see my youngest cousin, Emma. For some reason, Ken and I were away from everyone standing by the lake, and I asked him what it meant.

He looked at me and smiled. Then very simply he asked if I knew what a moose was, and I said yes. He asked if I knew what a deer was, and I said yes. Then he told me that I had the answer, I just had to figure it out for myself. And I asked him why, and he told me that the deer I was picturing might not be the same as the moose he was picturing.

For years, I had no idea what he was talking about. I was picturing a deer in my head, why would it look like his moose? Wouldn't it make more sense for us both to be thinking about a moose or a deer at the same time?

What he was trying to teach me was about perspective. I was focused on the deer while he was focused on the moose. Two different people can take away two different points of reference from the same event. Our personal experiences shape how we perceive things and we might not always understand.

In today's reading from Ecclesiastes, the author makes a point of reminding us that we might not understand God's plan from our perspective, but that he has a plan. We do not always understand his plan, because our perspective is not his. His time is not our time, his understanding is not our understanding.

God has a time for everything. But, even if he gives us the opportunity, the time, for something, we still have to choose to accept it. God can show us the way, but we still need to take responsibility ourselves and do it.

For so long, I had a timeline in my head about when I was supposed to do things. We all do that at some point in our lives, right? For me it was to get my license by 16, graduate high school by 18, graduate college by 23, get married by 25, have my first kid by 27. I was way off on those last two. I was going to work until I was 65 and then retire and then fill-in as pulpit supply at different churches. I was wrong on those as well.

God had different plans for me, that I didn't understand. His timeline for me was different from the one that I had placed upon myself. And once I stopped fighting his timeline, and accepted that I can try to change situations, but if it is meant to be it will be, my life got a lot simpler.

I stopped worrying about getting married, and I met Alyssa. I stopped trying to have the typical family, and eventually we were blessed with Wednesday. I stopped putting off my ministry, and a world of wonderful opportunities have presented themselves that I couldn't imagine.

But my Uncle Ken had figured it out. The moose was a big roadblock that was stopping me from being happy. The deer were little opportunities that could have a number of different results that depended on my perspective at the time. Did they slow me down because I was trying to do something at the wrong time or did they move on because it was the right thing at the right time?

Ecclesiastes tells us that there is nothing better for us than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we shall live. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by. God will guide us and protect us if we let him. If we worry about the when, they will consume us.

This morning I was talking with Wednesday, and she was concerned because some of her friends get in trouble at daycare and she didn't want to get into trouble as well. We discussed what her friends do that get them into trouble and I asked if she did those things as well, and of course she doesn't. I told her to stop worrying about getting into trouble. If she does the right thing because it's the right thing to do, she doesn't need to worry and she'll be happier.

If we do the right thing because it is the right thing to do, we will lead a much happier life. When our time for judgment comes, we can face it with no regrets. We can say that we didn't hit the moose because we were too focused on the deer. We lived our best life, because of who we are not because we tried to force opportunities and change God's plan for us. And we are better people because of it.

Let us pray...