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I was visiting a nursing home one day this week over the dinner hour and had the pleasure of visiting with a lady who is 97 years old, named Dorothy. She was asking about my children, and I told her I have three boys, ages 7, 8 and 9.

“Oh, what angels!” she exclaimed.

“Well,” I replied, “I’m not sure *that’s* the word I would choose, but yes, they’re great kids.”

“I am sure they are well-behaved little gentlemen,” she insisted.

“You know what?” I answered, “maybe it would be good for them to spend some time with you. Why don’t I drop them off with you some afternoon for a few hours?”

“How delightful!” she clapped her hands, “but hurry and do it soon, because I don’t have much time left.”

I thought about her last comment as I drove home...she doesn’t have much time left, she said...maybe she doesn’t...but then again, maybe she does...and then I wondered, do *I* have much time left?...do *you*? It’s something we all think about from time to time, and it’s a scary thought, so we usually change the subject real quick...but it’s worth pausing to consider today in light of our reading from Corinthians....*What are we called to do with the time we have left?*

First of all, doesn’t it seem like we’ve been hearing for weeks about these silly quarrels that the church in Corinth is experiencing? Well, it has been weeks....Paul is

addressing the various fighting factions within his beloved congregation...some parishioners are claiming loyalty to Paul, some to Peter, some to Apollos, you know the argument, we've been hearing about it for weeks, and we're sick of it, so just think of how poor Paul felt, because he's the one who had to actually deal with it for who knows how long! But remember, while that congregation was fighting, life in Corinth went on.

This begs the question, *do we sometimes get so caught up in our fights, like the Corinthians, that we fail to hear the clock ticking?*

Do we forget that, while the voices of dissent and aggression escalate and while blood boils, the days are passing with alarming speed?

Philip was born 7 years ago today. But he is still a baby, in my mind. I remember his first cry, the first time my fingers touched his soft skin, the first time he ever opened his eyes, the sound of his very first breath...there is life all around us, and it is growing, and it is blooming, and it is flourishing, even now in these ugly remaining days of winter...but are we failing to see it, because we are so caught up in fights and quarrels, at church or at home or at school or at the office?

And is that where God really wants us to focus our attention?

Or does God want us to look at the constants in life, the things that do not change, even as we are preoccupied by fighting about this and that...? What, then, *are* the abiding truths? Where should the Corinthians' attention be, where should *ours* be?

These are the things we hold before us—these are the truths that should center us

and calm us, and pull us back to the cross of Jesus...

...truths like—God is God.

And that's the point of our first lesson, that with all the commandments and rules God gives us, we will fail. We simply will. We are broken people, and that's a sad thing. But the good thing is that God is God. And God exists in order to forgive us, to create new hearts in us each and every day. And that God loves us and wants us to live in loving relationship with him and with each other. God is God.

Another abiding truth is that life comes from death, God makes it so. We will hear about about this during Lent—that God brings life from death over and over and over and over again, and has been at work doing so for millions of years. The Bible is a collection of stories that reveals God's creative and redemptive work to bring life from death. Christians call that salvation. Life comes from death.

And a third abiding truth is that there is always hope. Again, this is theme in the Bible that cannot be ignored. The Bible is full of examples of God's presence in the midst of the deepest human despair. Think of Ezekiel's valley of dry bones. Think of Job's profound loss. Think of Judas hanging from that tree. And then think of Paul's words to his church in Rome, who also endured their share of quarrels and fights, “For I am convinced that neither life nor death, nor angels nor demons, nor the present nor the future, neither height nor depth nor ruling powers nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love that God has for us in Jesus Christ...” and that

includes his own murderous past, that includes his stubborn and divided congregations, that includes your despair and mine. There is no place in creation where God is not; therefore, there is always hope.

These are abiding and unfailing truths, these are calls to bring our focus back to where it needs to be—on God's love, on the selflessness of the love of Jesus, and on his new commandment to love one another, as he has loved us...not not miss out on life because of our preoccupation with death, to not overlook the simple joys of breathing and laughing and jumping and eating and reading and singing and so on and so on.

And so, we come back to lovely Dorothy's comment at the dinner table, “Hurry, because I don't have much time left.” This can be a terrifying reminder of mortality, or it can inspire us to be the people God created us to be...a people who seek peace and reconciliation, a people who love good and hate evil, a people who pray for the well-being of enemies as well as friends, a people who do not mourn life, but who instead celebrate it, which is what God intends for us to do.