Hi,

Lauren Sandstedt is a St. Andrew member and is in her first year at SMU’s Perkins Seminary. She will intern at St. Andrew this summer. Lauren is a graduate of the Parish Episcopal School here In Dallas. Recently they asked her to write a weekly message to the school community during this time of crisis. Here is her message for this week:

***“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.” 1 Corinthians 13:12***

I remember driving on Highway 75 in light rain showers recently. It wasn’t quite enough rain to use the windshield wipers, yet enough drops to blur the view of the road ahead. This is what I imagine many of us are feeling right now. Life continues to evolve daily. There are brief moments when I see a familiar face on Zoom, or hear a family member’s voice, that I almost forget we are separated by physical distance. Just like my drive on the highway, we so desperately yearn to see in clear vision the end of the Covid-19 road that we are navigating.

In high-school I took the Myers—Briggs test (a fancy personality assessment) and recall that it deemed my personality “extroverted”. An accurate assessment if being with people in conversation is equivalent to the joyful adrenaline rush of Christmas Day or watching the World Cup. It also labeled me a “fix-it” personality (yep, we all know those people in our lives who would love to be the problem solvers of the world). With the recent and necessary “shelter in place” mandates, I have decided to repurpose my energy toward experiencing a rare season of quietness.  As a part of this, I spend time in scripture – even if it is a few minutes while eating my Cheerios. This week, I have been reading 1st Corinthians. This letter is credited to Paul the apostle, a man who experienced a spiritual encounter with Jesus and subsequently devoted his life to God’s calling to ministry. In a direct, dense letter to a church in Corinth (Greece), Paul’s writing covers a great deal of ground. Particularly the beautifully written chapter 13 includes the famous verse “Love is patient, love is kind…” (v.4) Perhaps you have heard this recited at weddings, celebrations, etc. Shortly following this, Paul uses an analogy of a mirror to reference the difference between “the times”. For there is our present time in which God’s Spirit is with us as we traverse through this broken world’s ups and downs. Yet, with the return of Christ, God’s world will be fully and beautifully restored. No tears, no pain, no Covid-19.

It is this hope of *seeing clearly*, that Paul writes about in verse 12. With God’s constant presence, where will we see the good in the people in our lives: family, coworkers, classmates, strangers . . .? Where will we see the grace of God in others . . .? As we pray for clarity, let us look for the good, together, this week.

Here are today’s updates:

* People without a Facebook account have been unable to access my personal page for the Facebook Live class events. It should work (or so we thought), but it doesn’t. So . . . [**if you don’t have a Facebook account you will have to view the class on my YouTube channel.**](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChtwqaUcpZbwyTWnkp6INwQ?view_as=subscriber) I will make sure all recordings are up and ready for viewing by the end of the day of the class. (YouTube willing!).
* **My next Sunday class will be a Q&A**. It will help if you email me questions ahead of time or at least have them ready before we start class. It is a bit cumbersome working from the Facebook comments -- easy to miss some. **Sunday at 12 noon** -- on [my Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle).
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org/). All of this week’s recordings and podcasts are posted.
* Keep sending in those movie and book recommendations!

Here is the third friendship story, certainly the longest and most personal of them all -- the story of David and Jonathan, King Saul’s son.

***Samuel 18:1–5 (CEB)***

**As soon as David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan’s life became bound up with David’s life, and Jonathan loved David as much as himself. From that point forward, Saul kept David in his service and wouldn’t allow him to return to his father’s household. And Jonathan and David made a covenant together because Jonathan loved David as much as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his armor, as well as his sword, his bow, and his belt. David went out and was successful in every mission Saul sent him to do. So Saul placed him in charge of the soldiers, and this pleased all the troops as well as Saul’s servants.**

***1 Samuel 19:1-7 (CEB)***

**Saul ordered his son Jonathan and all his servants to kill David, but Jonathan, Saul’s son, liked David very much. So Jonathan warned David, “My father Saul is trying to kill you. Be on guard tomorrow morning. Stay somewhere safe and hide. I’ll go out and stand by my father in the field where you’ll be. I’ll talk to my father about you, and I’ll tell you whatever I find out.”**

**So Jonathan spoke highly about David to his father Saul, telling him, “The king shouldn’t do anything wrong to his servant David, because he hasn’t wronged you. In fact, his actions have helped you greatly. He risked his own life when he killed that Philistine, and the Lord won a great victory for all Israel. You saw it and were happy about it. Why then would you do something wrong to an innocent person by killing David for no reason?”**

**Saul listened to Jonathan and then swore, “As surely as the Lord lives, David won’t be executed.” So Jonathan summoned David and told him everything they had talked about. Then Jonathan brought David back to Saul, and David served Saul as he had previously.**

I suppose we could all recount some stories of times in our lives when we felt part of a pretty one-sided friendship. Perhaps it was a difficult season in your friend’s life when you were called to be simply loyal, looking past the moment, willing to be the “supporting actor.”

To grasp this story, we need an understanding of the Hebrew word, *hesed*. It is a love that is faithful, unwavering, and sure. It is a love that seeks the well-being of others. It is active, in that *hesed* is not an attitude to be held, but an action to be performed. *Hesed* is a social word, lived out in relationship in community. *Hesed* is a love that endures; it is loyal. It is a covenantal love. Used 245 times in the Old Testament, *hesed* is most often used to speak of God’s love for humanity

A covenantal love. A faithful love. A loyal love. That is *hesed*, and you’d be hard-pressed to find a truer example than Jonathan’s love for David. Jonathan, seemingly no more than a supporting actor in David’s story, actually shows more of God’s heart than David often did. But first, some of their back story.

*Like father, like son?*

During the time that the Israelites settled in Canaan, they had no earthly king. The Lord God was their king. But as time wore on, the people, wanting to be like their neighbors, pushed harder and harder for a human king. In the end, God gave them what they wanted. God’s prophet Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of the united tribes of Israel. Saul quickly proved to be a disappointment. He was disobedient to God and given to making rash decisions.

Once, Saul was even ready to kill his own son, Jonathan, for breaking one of Saul’s battle orders. Only the intervention of the people saved Jonathan’s life. After Saul disobeyed God a second time, we are told that “The Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:35). God told his prophet Samuel to anoint a young shepherd named David as the next king of Israel. Not knowing that God had chosen David to be his successor, Saul welcomed David into the royal court as a musician. But after David defeated the Philistine giant, Goliath, the mentally and spiritually deteriorating Saul began to suspect that David might be the one to whom God had given Saul’s kingdom. And Saul’s heart turned against David.

*Jonathan*

Jonathan, Saul’s son, first met David soon after his victory over Goliath and the Philistines. Like so many others during David’s long life, Jonathan must have been drawn to the charismatic young man. We are told that Jonathan’s soul was bound to David’s. Jonathan loved David as he loved himself. Jonathan made a covenant with David, even handing over his royal robe and sword. It is important for us to see that Jonathan offered all this to David without even a hint of reciprocity or reward.

Jonathan’s covenantal friendship, his loyal love/*hesed*, was a gift freely given. Indeed, this pretty much characterized their relationship. Twice more, Jonathan would make a covenant with David and only on the third occasion are we explicitly told that the covenant was made mutually. In Jonathan’s gift of friendship there is no *quid pro quo*; there is no transaction. Such is grace. And in his grace-filled love of David, Jonathan reflects the faithful love/*hesed* that God holds for his people. Both Jonathan and God stand ready to act, for action is what true *hesed* demands.

*Supporting David*

Reflecting a friendship based upon the bonding of souls, Jonathan must always walk a tightrope between his loyalty to his father Saul and his loyalty to David. In today’s second passage from 1 Samuel, Jonathan persuades his father to spare David’s life and restore him to the royal court. Later, Jonathan and David would conspire in an attempt to discern Saul’s true intentions toward David (see chapter 20). Even then, all that Jonathan asks of David is that, no matter what happens, David would always be faithful to Jonathan’s own family. At their last meeting (chapter 23), Jonathan eagerly abdicates to David his own right to be Saul’s successor. Not long after, Jonathan is killed in battle. It would be many years before David would act upon his promise to be faithful to Jonathan’s descendants.

*The Death of Jonathan*

Jonathan never really broke with his father, even as he worked to ensure David’s escape from Saul. After a long time on the run from Saul, David and his men seek refuge with Acish, the king of Gath, one of the Philistine city-states. David seems prepared to do battle alongside the Philistines and against Saul. However, the Philistine lords reject David’s help, fearing that he is still loyal to the Israelites, Saul or no Saul.

The Philistines and the Israelites go on to fight a great battle at Mt. Gilboa, which is southeast of Nazareth. The Philistines rout the Israelites, killing Saul and three sons, including Jonathan, who fought alongside his father.

When David learns that Saul and Jonathan were killed, his mourning is profound for the loss of both father and son. 2 Samuel 1:17-27 records David’s song of lamentation which closes with:

“O my dear brother Jonathan, I’m crushed by your death. Your friendship was a miracle-wonder, love far exceeding anything I’ve known – or hope to know.” (from *The Message)*

*Loyalty and friendship*

Though soul mates, the relationship of Jonathan and David is pretty one-sided; Jonathan gives far more than he ever gets. If anyone ever had a true blue supporter, it was David. Reflecting on Jonathan’s love for David, Patricia Tull writes, “Friendship often begins with the unmotivated kindness of one person toward another, a generous, uncalculated action offered simply from the joy of companionship. Jonathan’s spontaneous love initiated the friendship and over the course of several episodes he continues to nourish it. He asks nothing of David in the present; all he asks for the future is to be remembered for the sake of his descendants. . . Jonathan stands in good company with the God whose love for humankind precedes and exceeds all possible returns . . . [Jonathan] is the friend few of us deserve but most of us would dearly love to have.”

Jonathan could have acted like his father, working always to protect his own interests. Instead, Jonathan chose the path of friendship, covenant, and trust. He pledged himself to work sacrificially for David’s goodwill.

*A movie recommendation*

No sports. None at all, for weeks now. . . . So, for those of who are into sports or *Downton Abbey*, Dawn Phillips has a recommendation for you. *The English Game* is a six-part mini-series from Julian Fellowes about English football (soccer) becoming a game of everyone, not just the wealthy. Sounds like good stuff! It is a recently released Netflix series.

*A book recommendation*

N. T. Wright has written a commentary on every book in the New Testament, his “For everyone” series. It is aimed at lay people and provides Wright’s own translation with commentary on each section. It is very suitable for a daily devotional, as it is divided into bite-sized chunks. You might try starting with *Mark for Everyone*. I’m pretty sure you will get a lot out of it.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott