First let me apologize in advance because I am going to do a very Generation X thing this morning and use an example from *Star Wars*. I promise my behavior will not soon degrade into *School House Rock* references and further promise that I will do better next time, maybe referencing a little Flaubert. So here it goes: As most of you probably know, in the *Star Wars* franchise there was a character named Darth Vader and he was a bad guy. However, before he was a bad guy he was a good guy by the name of Anakin Skywalker. For five movies and 28 years we were never told what made Anakin Skywalker decide to become bad. People had dramatic theories but finally in a movie known as *Revenge of the Sith* all was revealed. And so, what was the existential crisis that moved Anakin from the good column to the bad column? Or put in *Star Wars* parlance what earth shatteringly monumental event sent him to the dark side? Well, as best we can tell from the movie, he was disappointed with the HMO plan offered by the Jedi Knight’s insurance carrier. And in an effort to save his pregnant wife from some slipshod in-network doctor with bad Yelp reviews he decided to switch to the dark side because he was told, in so many words, that they offered better medical benefits. It seems like a lot of buildup for a pretty pedestrian decision. The whole fate of this galaxy far far away was changed over who offered a lower deductible. Now, I am pretty sure that what I am about to say is not blasphemous but I had sort of the same feeling this morning when we read about how Matthias came to replace Judas.

We know most of the story – Judas betrays Jesus, he buys some land and then he explodes. As a result of this betrayal and his being dead, the disciples decide they need to get another disciple because twelve was a very important number, at least symbolically because of the twelve tribes of Israel. And so, the replacing goes like this: Peter stands up and says, “One of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us-- one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." Everyone agrees that this is a good idea and then they pray saying, “Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” So far so good. There is a deep and symbolic void in the Apostles ranks, they pray to God to show who they should choose and then…. they cast lots. For those of you unfamiliar with casting lots it is basically akin to rolling dice or asking the Magic 8 Ball. This monumental decision ultimately came down to who rolled snake eyes. And maybe my objection is a modern one because there are a number of instances in the Bible where casting lots is seen as an acceptable way to discern God’s will. It is the way that Moses figured out which tribes got which territory in the Promised Land and how the sailors figured out that Jonah was to blame for the storm. So, it does seem that casting lots has at various times and places been a way for God’s will to be known and to be done. However, it can also look a little like superstition. Superstition being where we tell God how things are going to work – I am going to roll these dice and then God is required to make the dice give me a sign. But if dice are good enough for the disciples, can we decide things like if we should go to church based on what one of those Dungeons and Dragons 20-sided dice comes up with? Well, I think the answer is probably not and the reason I say this is because generally speaking we are neither one of the disciples nor are we Moses. Furthermore, while the idea of games of chance do show up in the Bible as a means for discerning God’s will they really don’t show up that often. And it’s not like anyone casts lots anymore. But I do think it opens us up to a larger discussion and that is how do we hear from God? Can we tell God that He needs to give us an answer right here and right now in the way that those who cast lots did or is there a larger principle of which we need to be aware? Well, here are my thoughts.

If we think of our relationship with God in the same way we think of human relationships we might notice that there is often something different and that is our relationship with God is much less organic and more scheduled. For example, when I go home, I don’t announce to Amy that she has three minutes in which to tell me what I need to know, and yet with God we set aside prayer time ask a question and then expect an answer to be at the ready. I am sure Matthias was a wonderful Apostle but was God obligated to show up in the roll of the dice because we think he should? In human terms have any of us ever had a wonderful conversation because we told the other person that we expected them to provide us with a wonderful conversation? No, generally they just sort of happen. And they generally only happen when we are spending a lot of time around a person.

When I was at Nashotah House during a board meeting, I suggested that it might be helpful if board members did something to aid in raising money for the seminary. One guy who had been there for years chimed in saying, “We tried that once and it didn’t work.” I think that might be some of our view of our relationship with God, we tried it once and it didn’t work. We prayed and did not hear anything and so concluded it was not worth pursuing. But we cannot give up so easily. We must pursue the relationship. So, what I would like to suggest is that we need to be deliberate in our time spent with God. We need to set aside time and it needs to be a generous amount of time. We can’t simply demand that God do things or show us things because that is not Christianity but is rather superstition.

Bringing it all back to my Star Wars example. As I stated the problem, I had with Star Wars was the big buildup to something so mundane, but we can treat God like this as well. We can come to church in a beautiful place, worship God in the beautiful words of the prayer book, sing majestic hymns, imbibe the body and blood of Christ and then when we want something we talk to God the same way we talk to the kid at the Arby’s drive through – I want two of these, one of those and don’t skimp on the horsey sauce this time. Our prayer life should look like our worship and it should involve our whole being. And to do all of that it takes time, it cannot be done through shortcuts. Or if you want it in the words of St. Paul, we are to pray without ceasing. And this might be frustrating at times. Just as we don’t always have wonderful conversations or deep interactions with loved ones there may be times where we pray and not much happens but that is no reason to give up. It may only be through the mundane and unremarkable that we open ourselves to the remarkable. Casting lots is attractive because it makes God beholden to our schedule, but such a relationship will never go any deeper and we will miss out on the beauty and love of God. But if we take the time and wait patiently on the Lord then we may be his, this day and forevermore.