

**“Freedom to Love “**  
Rev. David Gregory  
June 26, 2022  
3rd Sunday after Pentecost



**Readings**

Galatians 5:13-15  
from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom. If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?

“Champion the Enemy's Need”  
a poem by Kim Stafford in his book *We Begin a Better Nation: Poems to Keep On*

Ask about your enemy's wounds and scars.  
Seek their hidden cause of trouble.  
Feed your enemy's children.  
Learn their word for home.

Repair their well.  
Learn their sorrow's history.  
Trace their lineage of the good.  
Ask them for a song.

Make tea. Break bread.

“I know I sound like a broken record.” As I wrote those words I began to realize that there are generations of people all around us who don’t really know what that means. “A 45 rpm record on a turntable. It gets scratched. The needle keeps skipping back to the same groove.” Say that to a sixteen-year-old and experience the lack of comprehension. It’s like when you speak of dialing a phone. You get a quizzical look, and perhaps a slight concern that Grandpa isn’t as sharp as he once was. But I do sound like a broken record today. I am skipping back to the same groove again and again. Over the last ten years, I have been speaking of the New Reformation, about how it’s already here, and that in the words of the late Phyllis Tickle, the Church itself is holding a sort of great rummage sale, institutionally lightening the load, offloading a great deal of unused tradition and outmoded structures, and focusing on a very few essential, precious things.

We use the terminology of hospice when we speak of the wider church today. Maybe we’re premature in our assessment, or perhaps we’re far too late with it. What we’ve learned together is that something new is trying to be born. We are called to be the midwives of this new creation. The only constant is change. We might as well embrace it. It’s not a bad thing; it’s a real thing. It’s a “life” thing, and it’s where we are. In this 45 rpm record that is the body of my work over the last forty years, this is the place that I keep skipping back to.

Here’s another place to which I return: I believe that we live in a benevolent and cooperative universe. Within what we call Divine Spirit is an evolutionary process that exists at a cellular, even sub-atomic level. The deeper we go within our understanding of all things quantum, the greater the insights that come to us about our own ecosystem, and about our universe. This deepening understanding transforms our perception of what we call God, and rather than causing us to reject this greater sense of divinity, this eternal ground of being, it’s actually more likely to help us embrace a greater awareness of it. Simply put, God is just way bigger than we ever thought. What we have called God, this transcendence that humanity has done its best to describe with language and concepts available at any given time in history, does not fit into any single tradition, philosophy, or system of belief. We take the symbols of our own traditions, perhaps, as the yeast in the dough, but then we let it grow, expand, and create, until we realize that this creation never stops and never finishes. We call this the green growing edge at which we live. Homeostasis, the status quo, the maintenance of things as they are, is simply an illusion. Creation never ends. The world never stops, and change is not only inevitable, it is to be desired.

We may have a few questions about that idea this week. Based upon who you are religiously, spiritually, morally or politically, you are either celebrating a long-sought victory or a worst-case scenario, given the whirlwind of history we’ve lived in just these last few days. I have been sorting out my own energy, my own thoughts and feelings about all of it, and if you think I come here on any given Sunday with any of that figured out, you might want to guess again.

Early in the week was the solstice, and all of the beautiful light we experience at this amazing time of year. Tripp and I chose the solstice as the moment to legally marry eight years ago, and we did it on purpose. So much light, so much joy (elation, really!) for us and our loved ones, that we could finally do this (happy Pride, everyone!). It seemed on that day that anything and everything was possible. And it was. This year’s solstice felt the same way. And then our new grandson chose to make his entrance into this world a month early. There was concern at first, but I’m happy to say that last night he had his first graduation, this one from the neonatal unit, and in a couple of days he’ll likely be able to go home. Everything feels possible.

This has been the week. The roller coaster. Such great joy, such huge concern. For the first time in 108 years, there is no longer a limitation on who can carry a concealed handgun in the State of New York. Also for the first time in decades, we have new firearm legislation that has been signed into law. Anything and

everything is possible. And of course, a woman's autonomy and agency over her own body has been rescinded for the first time in nearly fifty years. I need not spend time on this, since the entire world is in an obvious uproar.

When I say that we live in a benevolent and cooperative universe, this does not preclude contrast and conflict, like the escalating turmoil we see around us. This is what reformation is all about. This is the evolutionary process. These conflicts and contrasts are the very things that prompt us to move forward in the work of co-creation. Light would have no meaning without shadow. Without darkness there would be no reason to seek the light. Without the presence of toxic patriarchy, we'd never really understand the healthy nature of the sacred masculine and the sacred feminine, and how beautifully they create together in the Divine Mind. And so, how should I live today? What should I do next? Do I protest? Do I have a social media meltdown? Do I crawl in a hole? Do I move to Costa Rica? Politically there is only one thing for me to do, and that is simply to vote, and to encourage everyone to do so. And I mean *everyone*. Everyone should vote. When everyone votes, the will of the minority remains in the minority. That's just how it is. Vote. Vote. Vote. Everybody *vote*. That's the political solution, and the only political solution. Did I mention vote?

What I should do next from a moral perspective is a little more complex. I can actively resist, but I'll tell you how that's been working for me. Resistance brings me more of what I don't want, so perhaps I choose instead to open the door to more of what I do want. I can get out in public and do some moral posturing. I can argue for it. I can prove them wrong, at least in my own mind. I can preach sermons, make speeches and blog posts. This effort will probably never change a single mind. Perhaps I choose instead to hear why the people with whom I disagree, disagree with me. What is their journey? What are their fears? I know my own wounds very well, but I'm not well acquainted with theirs.

Crying foul and shaming the hypocrites has no effect. Interestingly, those are the very things that appear to have gotten Jesus crucified. Jesus was the model for speaking truth to power, and he did it without being snarky on Facebook. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. I'm not Jesus, but I claim to follow him, so perhaps I might learn from him about how to do this. Maybe I won't be crucified. The Apostle Paul clearly warned the followers of Jesus not to bite and devour one another, lest they all be consumed. Civil wars are never really won, for in seeking retribution against others we only harm ourselves. "Everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: *Love others as you love yourself.*" You may ask, "You mean I have to do this, even now?" I think we need to do this especially now. I had chosen this brief poem by Kim Stafford long before the events of the week, and for me this is a simple expression of the Synchronous Divine Spirit.

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If we are to ask ourselves what to do now, besides VOTING, I'd say we could start there.