

## “The Evolutionary Pull”

Rev. David Gregory

July 26, 2020

Pentecost 8



### Readings

We are called to be larger than who we can imagine being in this moment. The cosmic principles are a new way of understanding, seeing, and acting in a world that seems to be torn apart by a misunderstanding of the beauty of diversity, the holiness of essence, and the evolutionary pull of communion.

— Sister Joan Brown of New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light

Jesus doesn't dominate the other, avoid the other, colonize the other, intimidate the other, demonize the other, or marginalize the other. He incarnates into the other, joins the other in solidarity, protects the other, listens to the other, serves the other, even lays down his life for the other.

— Brian McLaren in *The Great Spiritual Migration*

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

— Paul the Apostle in *Romans 12:5*

---

We speak often of the gifts of these difficult times, and when we do so, it is not to minimize the pain that is being suffered by those who have become ill, by those who have lost friends and loved ones, or those who struggle with the loss of employment, health care, and housing. This is an exceedingly difficult time, and it's far from over. There is a long road ahead as we heal our common wounds and navigate new ways of living and being in community. At the same time, however, we are making a series of pleasant discoveries while connecting ourselves to individuals and organizations, both religious and non-religious, who share common values of integrity, justice, equality, care for the earth, and universal access to health care—to name just a few. These new networks will replace the standing silos of outmoded institutions, both religious and non-religious.

The pandemic itself is causing us to reevaluate the way we do everything, from political campaigns to grocery shopping, to spiritual practice, to social justice activism. We are moving from a time of talking about social change to making it happen. The organizations that actually do something are the ones that will survive. In the words of the late great John Lewis, “If you see something that is not right, not fair, and not just, you have a moral obligation to DO something about it.” And that is why we are becoming acquainted with any number of initiatives and organizations that are, without apology, taking up that moral obligation to do something. These are people we might have otherwise missed, and our introduction to them is one of the gifts of this time.

For a number of years I have been a daily follower of Father Richard Rohr and the Center for Action and Contemplation. I’ve always thought of Richard Rohr as a person who dismantles walls and builds bridges. It was in one of his posts that I first read the words of Joan Brown, a Franciscan Sister who is the Executive Director of the New Mexico chapter of a non-profit advocacy group called Interfaith Power and Light. If you’re not familiar, I would invite you Google them. These words of Sister Joan were shared by Richard Rohr a year ago, but somehow they are even more applicable to our present moment.

*We are called to be larger than who we can imagine being in this moment. The cosmic principles are a new way of understanding, seeing, and acting in a world that seems to be torn apart by a misunderstanding of the beauty of diversity, the holiness of essence, and the evolutionary pull of communion.*

What I love about her words is how clear and direct they are. She describes our world exactly as it is: torn apart. She tells us what is tearing us apart: misunderstanding. She lists the things that are misunderstood: the beauty of diversity, the holiness of essence, and the evolutionary pull of communion. It’s that last phrase about the “evolutionary pull” that has captured my attention this week, and it speaks to me of a particular energy which, if we were to get out its way and stop resisting it, would transform the world that *is* into the one we wish it to be. And this transformation is driven by our communion, our oneness, our shared essence, as we’ve taken to calling it.

A core value of modernism is the self-sufficiency of the individual. Our adherence to this value has propelled us into a culture of consumption, a myth of success at all costs, and the dominance of one individual over another. Jesus, of course, modeled the opposite value as he set about to create community, gathering people on hillsides, feeding them when they were hungry, healing them when they were sick, and challenging them to care for each other in the same way they would care for themselves. After the crucifixion, the early writings of the church tell us that his followers gathered themselves together, shared their meals in common, and pooled their resources so that if anyone had a need, that need was met. These common meals and the sharing of resources were called their “communion.” Our commemorations of it are often centered in the Last Supper, but as practiced by the early Christians, it was more about communion with one another. The whole idea is that we are not separate. We are not independent beings. We are highly interdependent, and our communion transcends the world that we see and feel and hear and taste and touch. The evolutionary pull of communion is energetic, more than anything else, and it prompted the Apostle Paul to remind his readers in Rome that “we are members one of another.” This energy is in the form of light, which emanates from us and to us. Right now it feels as though we have been broken open in ways that challenge us, and sometimes cause us pain, but the broken places allow for the light to travel to us and from us.

We are actually united in ways we have never seen before, in ways we never thought possible, and this oneness, this “evolutionary pull” is the antidote to everything and everyone who seeks to divide us into hateful, fearful camps. Those who divide us as human beings are working against the evolutionary pull. They swim against an ever-strengthening current. Whatever successes they might appear to have are only temporary. In the meantime, we are called to be the larger beings in the mix, to hold the energy of faith and wisdom for the dawning of a different day when, as Jesus often said, the realm of God is nearby. As Brian McLaren reminds us, Jesus is not a model of domination, of avoidance, of colonization, or of intimidation, nor of the marginalizing of anyone. Instead, he joins in solidarity and protection, in listening and serving, and in sacrificial love.

Our church is not alone in reexamining our identity and purpose in light of these new realities. It is not hyperbolic to say that we will never be the same again, or that our life and ministry together will ever go back to the way it was. We’ve been awakened to new expressions of timeless ideas, challenged by the courage and bravery of the John Lewises of this world. We are called to set ourselves free into this evolutionary pull and celebrate the single essence that we all share. Let us drop the oars and get into the flow of the world we long to see.

