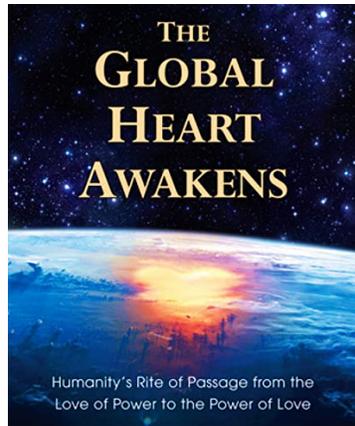


“One Mind and One Spirit”

Rev. David Gregory

September 27, 2020

Pentecost 17



Readings

Live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you. Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. None of you should think only of his own affairs, but should learn to see things from other people’s point of view.

~ Philippians 2:2-4

from *The J. B. Phillips New Testament*

This drama is a love story on the grandest scale . . . a tale of how to live from our hearts, co-creating a world run by what we love more than what we fear, connection more than separation, collaboration more than competition, embracing mystery as much as certainty. It is a story that looks at love, not as a mere sentiment but as a profound social organizing principle, indeed the self-organizing principle that mirrors the myriad relationships within nature’s web of life.

~ Anodea Judith in

The Global Heart Awakens:

Humanity’s Rite of Passage from the Love of Power to the Power of Love

There is no way around it. We are living through a time of ripening social upheaval and civil unrest, and if you’re like me you probably have moments, hours, or sometimes days at a time where anxiety can get the better of you. I have daily experiences of turning off my phone, closing my tablet, exiting my browsers, disabling notifications—every instance where I feel I have to say “enough!” I simply cannot breathe. And then I think of those who literally cannot breathe, those in chokeholds, those who die sound asleep in their homes, those who are stopped and detained without cause; those whose skin color means that they are more often without health care and far more likely to die of the coronavirus than I am. These are the

realizations that slap me awake and help me regain my equilibrium. Once I feel strong enough to try it again, my devices get turned back on, lest I become uninformed and unresponsive to those certain threats that I could actually do something about. It's a scene that plays out multiple times a day, and honestly I'm just trying to live through it, to keep moving forward one step at a time, one moment at a time; trying to take what's going on in bite-sized pieces that won't render me hopelessly ineffective as a citizen, as a human being, or even as a Christian.

Like most ministers and spiritual leaders, I feel the pressure to say something important to you today, but lofty rhetoric seems hollow. Theological propositions miss the target entirely. Positive thinking is helpful, but inadequate to fully meet the moment. It is a difficult time for people like me to offer words that actually matter. When I'm looking for words that matter, I often end up in contact with a cutting edge online spiritual community called Enfleshed, led by a lovely queer formerly Methodist minister by the name of Anna Blaedel. You've probably heard that name from me before. This week I found some words there that mattered to me:

Open your hearts. Do not fear what may spill out. Let anger speak its truth. Let hurt tell its story. Let sadness have the space to breathe. The aches of the world echo through our spirits, and the Holy holds it with us.

In times of individual and personal turmoil, we might be encouraged to "cheer up, stop crying, look on the bright side. It's just gonna get better." These are well-meaning and well-intentioned sentiments that on the surface might or might not help. But at their root, they're just telling me not to feel what I'm feeling. But this is a COLLECTIVE moment of turmoil, an "in-case-of-emergency-break-glass" kind of moment. The words of Anna Blaedel matter, not because they contain the answer to our problems, but because they allow us to feel what we feel without being alone. Our anxieties are held with us by the Holy One. So, rather than dealing in propositions to support the existence of God, I offer you the experience of God instead.

The only way through these perilous storms is to grow deeper roots. This isn't something you can get from a seminar or a book. It's about prolonged, sustained engagement with God, or the Divine, or Sacred Spirit, or however you can best refer to it. This engagement is the goal of everything we do and say here at CCC, and it's the reason you will find our online offerings filled with experiences of spiritual practice instead of intellectual teachings designed to impart knowledge from one brain to another. Imparting that kind of teaching would be like handing someone a vacuum cleaner and neglecting to show them the practice of plugging it in. We all know it takes connection and electricity to make anything happen with it. My experience of the Divine is that it is the electricity of life. It keeps me breathing when I'm not mindfully doing so. It keeps my heart beating, the planets moving, the sun shining and the grass growing. Contemplative spiritual practice is simply the process by which we plug into THAT. It is true that in these next days, weeks, and months, we are making collective decisions that will determine the course of our future, the future of our nation, of our children and grandchildren, and of the planet itself, and it behooves us to make these choices in a plugged-in state.

Our forebears gained independence from authoritarian monarchies; they summoned energies they didn't know they had and beat all odds to find independence. They plugged it in. A hundred years ago they rose to meet a global pandemic with science and definitive action. They plugged it in. Seventy- five years ago when it seemed the world was at the mercy of fascist regimes, they won another world war. They plugged it in. History is the story of challenge and greatness, of possible defeats and amazing victories. Where do those victories find their power? It's in the energy that creates worlds, and it does not penetrate us through our brains, but it flows easily into our hearts. It is the power of love that circumvents the love of power.

In words that are two thousand years old, and kept alive for us by the twentieth century English religious scholar John Bertram Phillips, we hear about this plugged-in energy that we call love.

Live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you.

These words get amplified by contemporary author Anodea Judith in her insightful book, *The Global Heart Awakens: Humanity's Rite of Passage from the Love of Power to the Power of Love:*

This drama is a love story on the grandest scale . . . a tale of how to live from our hearts, co-creating a world run by what we love more than what we fear It is a story that looks at love, not as a mere sentiment but as a profound social organizing principle, indeed the self-organizing principle that mirrors the myriad relationships within nature's web of life.

I may not know exactly how I'm going to navigate the coming days and weeks. I won't do it perfectly, and I may not even do it well, but I can learn to recognize the energies at play. The greatest evidence of them is how I feel at a given moment. My high anxiety is the vacuum being pushed over the rug with no electricity, with all the blood, sweat and tears that say I'm working really hard at something that probably makes little difference. But in prolonged, sustained, energetic contact with the Divine Energy that is Love, we, with one mind and one spirit, can move mountains. Let's move this one, shall we?

