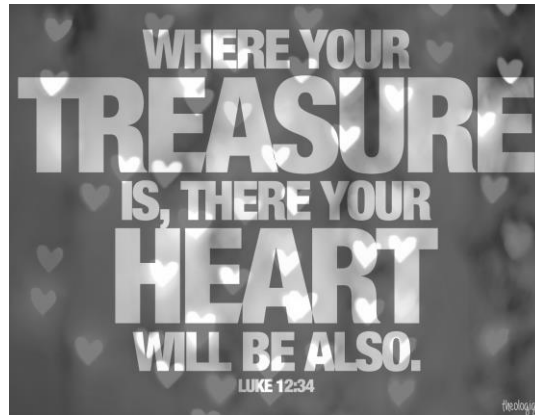


THE ONENESS OF US ALL



Scripture:

Psalm 33:12-22

¹²Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.

¹³The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all humankind. ¹⁴From where he sits enthroned he watches all the inhabitants of the earth— ¹⁵he who fashions the hearts of them all, and observes all their deeds. ¹⁶A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. ¹⁷The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save.

¹⁸Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ¹⁹to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

²⁰Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and shield. ²¹Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. ²²Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

Luke 12:32-34

³²“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



Last week I was hoping the lectionary for this Sunday would suggest a scripture that might apply to what I learned on my trip to India. Sure enough, this one works very well! Both the Psalm 33 and this Luke passage reflect on some of what I learned from being in India for eleven days where there is a plethora of Hindu, Buddhist temples, and Muslim mosques along with a few Christian churches, too.

Before we address today’s passage, let’s look at the verses leading up to it. Jesus has attracted the attention of many followers by this time in his ministry. Here he is preaching to all of them, but

especially to his disciples who are in training to carry on his ministry after he is gone. Jesus is giving them the tools and skills they need for survival for life on earth. And these skills are still applicable to us for healthy survival today.

In Luke 12:15-26 (just prior to today’s passage): Jesus teaches his disciples to “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself,

‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’

Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.”

He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest?”

LOVE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER

Adding this to today’s teaching of Jesus we hear him command us to not hoard material possessions, and not to worry about having the best food, or the best clothes and comforts, but to focus our hearts and actions on loving God and one another. We’ve heard this before... but do we listen and follow as true disciples of Christ?

This same theme was part of the teaching given to a group of us last Saturday morning in a meditation experience we attended at the Tushita Buddhist Retreat center in a town up the mountain from McLeod Ganj called Dharmkot.

Although the teacher leading the meditation hour was Buddhist, the teaching was basically the same as in our scripture passage today. The similar teaching is part of the oneness and universality in the life lessons from God. Our Almighty God speaks to people in various ways and through other religions. There is a oneness in some of the great teachings of the religions.

Today’s lesson is one that Jesus, the Son of God, and prophets like Buddha and Mohammed and the Dalai Lama often promote. It is a lesson of freedom from self-centeredness, a focus on love for God and one another, and a letting go of material things and as a result, a letting go of the suffering that anxiety causes each one of us.

AN ADAPTIVE MEDITATIVE EXPERIENCE

Let me walk you through an adapted meditative experience similar to what we did so you can imagine being in India on a high Himalayan mountain-side beside about eighty other western looking people, all walking up to participate in a guided meditation early on a Saturday morning.

The foggy mist was hanging in the trees as we ventured our way up a crooked, bumpy mountain road in a motorized rickshaw, zipping around a few curves with sheer cliffs down the side. (Like Mr. Toad’s wild ride at Disneyland.)

The ride took about twenty minutes and we passed many hikers and bikers making their way up, too. When we arrived in the Tushita Retreat Center we saw many young western looking people gathering and flowing into the meditation room.

When I saw the abundance of people, I thought maybe we should host meditative services like this at our church since it was attracting so many people from all over the world! I heard quiet conversations in French, German, Italian, English, and Japanese while we were walking up and taking off our shoes. But when we entered the large, undecorated room there was complete silence.

The large room had mats on the floor and a few chairs that lined the back of the room. People quietly began to settle into a meditative posture as they arrived. When so many came and filled the aisle and sides of the room, people automatically began to share their mats so that all had a place to sit on them and they didn’t have to sit on the cold floor. Good Karma filled the air.

After a few minutes, the barefoot reddish-brown bearded thirty-something leader came into the room and introduced himself as Kiran. With a New Zealand accent, Kiran said, “Today we will first

have a relaxing and centering meditation followed by an analytical meditation.”

OUR CENTERING MEDITATION

Let’s begin. Close your eyes. Be aware of your intention for coming to the meditation. What do you hope to get out of this time here?

Now be aware of your surroundings, those sitting near you. Keep your eyes closed. But acknowledge you are not here alone. We are all connected by our breath and the intertwining of molecules radiating from our bodies.

Be aware of your breath. Breathe slowly and deeply. Relax.

Be aware of your body, your senses, the contact your body has with the seat or the pew you are sitting upon. Sit with both feet solidly on the ground and your back sitting up as straight as possible. Rest your hands open to the sky on your knees. Be aware of any aches or pains you are feeling. Try to relax them away. Relax your toes, your feet, and your legs. Feel your torso and arms relax. Be aware of your neck and head relaxing. Relax away the tension in your face. Be aware of the way your breathing slowly and deeply is helping you center and be at peace. Open your mind now and let go of any worries or concerns. Worry does not add an hour to your life. It takes them away. So why worry? Open your mind to God. (silence)

OUR ANALYTICAL MEDITATION

Now the analytical meditation: Suffering and worldly cravings are universal to all human beings. Ponder how all humans strive to avoid suffering and how often these worldly cravings that we experience add to that suffering. He guided us to meditate on eight cravings. I will share with you just four since his teaching lasted about an hour with long periods of silence intertwined. Close your eyes and ponder:

1. The craving for material goods. We are told by the world of greed that the more we have, the more secure we will feel. So we hoard and hold on to material things until we are very burdened and anxious. (Silence)

2. The opposite of this craving is to let go and be free of craving material goods. Unburden yourself. Trust that God will provide. (Silence)
3. The craving for praise and compliments. We work hard to look good and get disappointed when our friends don’t notice and compliment us. We thrive on praise and attention and envy others who we think receive more than we do. (Silence)
4. The opposite of this craving is to let go of seeking praise and compliments from others. There is much power in humbleness. Spend your energy on God first. Do not to be concerned about what others think or say positively or negatively. Be free of that control over you. Let God be in control. (Silence)

Ponder how these four cravings apply to your own life journey.

Often the negative ones start from voices we hear and learn from in childhood. People teach us these things when we are young because they were taught the same things. Oppose your cravings for possessing more things and seeking praise. The Bible reassures us there is no need to allow these cravings to control you. (Silence)

Now think of those in your life who are currently suffering and lift them up to the light of healing. Now think of how you yourself may be suffering and lift up your suffering to the healing light of God. (Silence)

WHAT WE TREASURE

Jesus says what we treasure is where our heart is. And when our heart is focused on God and loving others, that is the treasure we take to heaven with us. Material treasures are transient and temporary, providing momentary pleasures. Long lasting treasures are those we hold close in our heart, soul, and mind.

**Love is the greatest treasure of all.
Loving God and others is a universal
teaching crossing all religions.
Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity
all teach that love is the greatest treasure
to receive and to share.**

India is a Hindu country, and although they say they have millions of gods, their supreme God is called Brahma. They believe God is in everything and all around.

To the Hindu, the cow represents the sacredness of all creatures, and the cow is a symbol of the earth. It always gives and feeds, representing life and the support of life. They drink the cow's milk but do not eat the cow's meat or any other meat. A practicing Hindu is vegetarian. They eat no meat or fish; there is no destruction of any creatures. Karma, the idea that good deeds multiply and enhance your life is an important teaching in their faith.

The Dalai Lama, who is a Tibetan Buddhist supreme leader said, "My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness."

Much of his teaching is about compassion and kindness and how to relieve suffering while promoting peace and harmony.

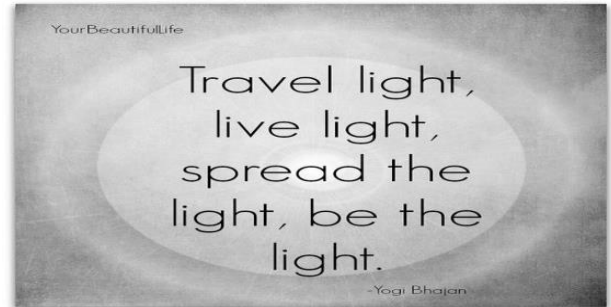
When you travel in India you see practices of various faith traditions everywhere: in the temples they build, in the way the people care for the street cows and dogs and monkeys, and in the food they eat and don't eat. Some have personal places of worship in their shops and homes where they burn incense.

Our guide said they practice their faith daily with their lives in contrast to a one day a week faith practice such as Sunday worship services.

When we checked out of the Tibetan guest house where we stayed, they gave us a blessing scarf to help us remember our time with them and to carry the blessings we received out into the world.

So as we receive this bread and the cup today, may we ponder how we will take this grace-filled blessing from God out into the world this week and every day of our lives. Amen.

Benediction: Another universal teaching is quoted by Yogi Bhanjan from Pakistan who teaches people to:



In Matthew 5, Jesus said, "You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works (and not praise you) but give glory to God in heaven." For each one of us, may God's glory shine through us.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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