

“Spirit, Word, and Seeds”

Galations 2:20; Romans 8

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Guest Minister

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From the Pulpit

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Good morning First Congregational,

We are currently in the season of examining and embodying the ongoing ministry of Christ’s church, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And what a time to be examining the embodiment of Christ’s Church. To be sensitive to our bodies and the bodies of others in this time: wrapped up in COVID-19, our health and social distancing, Anti-Racism work, justice rallying, and the call to examine our systems that have biases against certain bodies, against the health and wellness of LGBTQ bodies and women’s bodies.

What a time to be examining and living the ministry of Christ’s Church.

And as we engage the issues of our society, the issues of our families, and the issues within our own spirit, we as the body of Christ’s church, are called BEYOND. To become one with the mystery of God, and become vessels used by God.

Galations 2:20

²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,[g] who loved me and gave himself for me.

Pray with me: Lord anoint our hearts and minds that we might receive something from you, hide my words behind the cross, that all who hear this message come to know you more intimately. Amen.

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I don't know what possessed me, but in seminary I took a Zen Buddhism class that started every morning around 6am.

We meditated.

We learned the practice of Zen sitting, walking, 108 bows and more.

I struggled not to fall asleep, I spoke mantras, and I sought enlightenment, and I sought the inner God flame that I share with all of you.

One day while I was perched there on my two cushions, my hands folded in lotus position, thumbs touching,

my mind struggling to let the thoughts come and go like the tide, it was then, I saw it.

I saw a giant night crawler bug galivanting across the floor headed straight for my cushion.

In that moment I was not the same energy as the bug. It was a BUG and it was going to kill me.

Or eat me,

Or something.

I realized I feel that way in life sometimes.

That I am seeking Christ, enlightenment, and connection to my neighbor, but then there is something, usually bigger than a bug, that threatens to kill me or eat me or something.

The things that can isolate me from God's presence.

For me those things range from the overarching narratives of a lack of self-love and sense of worth, to everyday encountering of racism, sexism, and homophobia.

These are terrifying things, bigger than BUGs, everywhere in the midst of my spiritual path.

Threatening to Kill me, or eat me, or something.

And there are days, especially right now, I'm drowning in it, just as the world churns and struggles.

My focus on the flesh hostile and hellish, especially when I try to go it alone—and coronavirus pandemic times are surely isolating enough.

My fears dividing me from the neighbors I'm called to love and divided from my truest self who belongs to and is defined by God.

“If I didn't define myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive,” Audrey Lorde said during a speech at Harvard University in 1982.

What if we allow the Word of God to define who we are Beloved?

We burst outside the box of this dominant culture and thrive!

Romans 8 says

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit[e] set their minds on the things of the Spirit.[f] 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit[g] is life and peace.

Just a little reminder today that we who venture into the Christian faith are seeking to set our minds on the Spirit.

And this means

We shouldn't be facing our fleshly struggles alone. The Spirit is all about relationship. She is in relationship with our God the parent and in relationship with Christ. IF we want to embody the trinity our power is in relationships.

“We are called to delight in one another, modeling our God who delights in us”

I've been lucky to have a few people in my life who've been doing the “check in.” The “hey the world is doing some intense stuff right now, how are you?” Check in. A few of my white friends have intentionally let me air out my feelings, holding space, offering nothing more than a “thank you for sharing”— a space ripe for healing and growth for all of us.

Rev. Emily in her sermon “Don't Go far” talked about the recognizing that we can't cleanse from a distance, we can't do the healing labor of Christ without our own selves being in harm's way, and more. This means our bodies, our ideologies, our opinions, and more could be in harm's way. But we do it. We go towards each other, for cleansing and healing. We are called to both live in the

Spirit and work in the flesh connected to those who need us and who we need.

Setting our mind on the Spirit also means being fully present,

The present moment shows just how important our words are; the things we think, speak, and act on.

And all around us people are sowing seeds. Planting ideas and hopes and dreams. Maybe you are sowing seeds.

Some are angry seeds, hateful seeds, ignorant seeds, self-involved seeds.

Some are wise seeds, Loving seeds, and community needs seeds.

Some seeds masquerade as other seeds.

And at times I wonder if people know what they're planting, what they're growing, and what they're sowing.

This is why it's important to be fully awake to the moment. To be aware of love and of our calling.

Which brings me to setting our mind on the Spirit means setting our being on love.

Marianne Williamson's book *Return to Love* pg. 68: God's plan for the salvation of the world calls teachers to heal through the power of love. Teaching has little to do with verbal communication and **EVERYTHING** to do with a quality of human energy. "To teach is to demonstrate"

I ask that you call to mind, that person or persons, whose God energy is almost indescribable with how it has impacted you. Those

people who have taught you loving things without saying anything to you.

Now, I'm part of a big family of talkers, and one thing I've always noticed is how some people convey powerful messages with their life, with their movement, with their silence, with their actions.

We are called to do this. To convey a message with our energy. But not just any energy, the wild love of Christ. THAT is the energy. It is the Word becomes flesh.

Richard Rohr calls this being "known through" a more integrated knowing than reason alone. Where God becomes more a verb than noun, where God is more process than conclusion, experience than dogma, where God is more a personal relationship than an idea.

It is when our highest awareness of the miraculousness of our neighbor intersects with our present moment wherever we are.

Now, we know we need relationship, the present moment, and the wild love of Christ in our actions. Which seems like a lot to work towards, to accomplish on our spiritual path.

When I was taking that Zen Meditation class, I asked the teacher, a Korean eco-feminist, Buddhist Christian Shaman, to help me understand how to really integrate. I'm big into intellectual answers.

And She said, "the only way to understand that is to practice. Is to sit. Is to pray. To do the work in front of you. To march, to act. To become fully present. To go deeply into our spiritual practice. Let go of your ego and let God transform you."

And so, we must practice Beloved.

It is when our empathy is at its highest,

When the love in us is the biggest,

When our ego is the smallest,

When our tightly sealed defenses are at their lowest

That's when the gift of difference AND the flame of God within us creates a new awareness. The absolute identity (who we are in Christ) meets our relative identity (our flesh our bodies our world).

Our present moment could be a zoom meeting; a chance encounter at the store; a Facebook conversation; cooking dinner for your kids; protesting in the streets, working from home or working at work, etc.

We are called to represent that wild love of God in these places while living. Vulnerably and openly responding to the naked moment of now.

Together.

When we accomplish that, the seeds sown in those moments will be the WORD of God.

Isaiah 55:11

so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Someone, Beloved, is dancing with you,

You will be successful in accomplishing what God has sent you here for. You are also the word in the flesh, the Spirit is in you and around you.

Take your neighbors hand and fear not. Have faith.

Amen.