

11/28/202

Hope & Gratitude

Today I want to speak, briefly, on not one, but two topics.

Hope and Gratitude

I want to take a few minutes to explore the word Hope.

Hope is a bit of a big deal today, mentioned in both the Daily Word and as part of the First Sunday of Advent in *A Christmas to Remember*.

The Essential Meaning of Hope according to Merriam Webster: to want something to happen or be true and think that it could happen or be true

According to the Christian Broadcasting Network: To the Christian, hope is the knowledge that we are being changed for the better as we trust in God's promises (Romans 8:28). It is the conviction that no matter the circumstances, God's plans for our lives are "for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11b NLT).

And, according to truthunity.net the Metaphysical meaning of hope (and faith): Hope is the expectation of good in the future. It is a quality (good as far as it goes) of sense mind because it is subject to time. Faith is the certain knowledge that our good is ours right now. It is of God; it goes beyond time and space.

Daily Word " My belief in goodness -- of the world, others, myself, and God -- begins with hope. Maybe hope is all I can muster after a period of doubt or disappointment.

Hope, as a want, as an expectation, as the knowledge that we are being changed for the better is the beginning of faith, the beginning of our belief in God as the universal good, light, and love in this existence and the next.

In periods of doubt or disappointment, when our faith, our firm belief in God as good, light, and love, may waver; hope is the want for more for better, the expectation for things to change, hope is what leads us back to faith, back to belief, back to God - good, light, and love.

A Christmas to Remember: Hope/Faith, First Sunday of Advent
(if not read as the reading, read the text)

The advent reading today highlighted some of the feelings we may have experienced with the holiday season 2020.

"The hope that carried us through last Christms may have been just a flicker in consciousness, a distant light on the horizon that this year would be better. But that hope inspired the faith that life is unfolding in an orderly way. That peace, love, and joy are more enduring than loneliness, disappointment, and sadness could ever be. Faith helped us adapt to a time we never imagined having to live through."

I find myself, in many ways, grateful for the past year and a half. Yes, there is much unrest, there are many struggles in our community, our country, and the world. We are still living with this virus and the constant polarizing political beliefs surrounding it. And, life is still not "normal", may never again be what it once was, if we are honest.

However, in this time, I have learned so much about myself and my loved ones. I've been forced to face truths I have been sheltered from. I have seen families draw tighter. I have seen people open their eyes and look honestly at the world around them and acknowledge their part in it.

For these things and more, I choose to live my life in Gratitude.

With almost every topic I have spoken on there has been a component of gratitude. The importance of gratitude seems to permeate, and be essential, to our growth, happiness, and spiritual wellbeing.

So, I dedicate the coming year, 2022 to Living in Gratitude. One of the first talks I did here at Unity was on the topic of Gratitude. One of the resources that I acquired to prepare that talk was *Living in Gratitude, Mastering the Art of Giving Thanks Every Day: A Month-by-Month Guide* by Angeles Arrien. I invite you to join me on my gratitude journey as I focus on the teachings from this book for my monthly talks in the coming year.

As I'd like to start with *January: Begin Anew*, when I speak next, on January 9th, please allow me to introduce you to this transformative book.

From the Introduction:

The application of multicultural wisdom - the shared values and the inherent positive beliefs of humanity - has become known as perennial wisdom. Perennial wisdom has been passed on from generation to generation since the birth of humankind. It continues to surface among diverse people, unconnected by geography or language, yet inextricably linked to what is inherently important in our shared experience of what it means to be human. Of all the universal themes that have been transmitted through perennial wisdom, the expression of gratitude continues to be the glue that consistently holds society and relationships together; its opposite - ingratitude - contributes to societal dissolution and separation. The expression of gratitude is essential to humankind's sustainability and survival. Gratitude's stabilizing and healing effects, which have been researched from multiple standpoints - cultural, psychological, physical,

spiritual, even financial - have made it abundantly clear that the benefits of living a grateful life are irrefutable.

If gratitude is a state of being that is essential to a life well lived, why then do we not cultivate and express it on a daily basis? After all, giving thanks and expressing appreciation for the blessings and gifts of life is a natural human response. Perhaps the key reason we do not make gratitude a part of our daily lives is that the accelerated pace and multiple distractions of modern life have simply made it all too easy to forget gratitude's importance.

We need not settle for our present disconnection from the healing, life-affirming, and uplifting human experience of gratitude. By engaging with the perennial wisdoms, we are reminded of our natural capacity to feel and express gratitude. Through conscious and sustained practice over a period of time, we can discover again how gratitude and all its related qualities - thankfulness, appreciation, compassion, generosity, grace, and so many other positive states - can become integrated and embodied in our lives. And when people in great numbers choose to practice, integrate, and embody gratitude, the cumulative force that is generated can help create the kind of world we all hope for and desire for ourselves and for future generations.

IS THAT GOOD STUFF OR WHAT?!

Arrien goes on to explain that every language in the world has a way of saying "thank you". Gratitude resides in each human, crossing all boundaries and is emphasized by all the great religious traditions.

She defines gratitude as the recognition of the unearned increments of value in one's experience - the acknowledgement of the positive things that come our way that we did not actively work toward or ask for.

Gratitude is both a social and a theological virtue, a quality that supports the inherent goodness that resides within each human being.

As we go through the next year, focusing on gratitude, we will repeatedly come back to the Four Universal Portals (or entryways) to Gratitude:

- Blessings
- Learnings
- Mercies
- Protections

As well as The Benefits of Gratitude in the Four Quadrants of Life

- Health and Well-Being
- Work Environments and Communities
- Financial Stability
- Relationships

My plan for working with this book each month is to summarize the text and work to expand and explain the teachings. I will share my own journey and invite those who would like to participate to share their own insights as well. It is my hope that we can work together to Master the Art of Giving Thanks Every Day.

For those of you that may want to join me in reading this text in its entirety over the next year, I have ordered the 8 used copies I could find online to gift to those who may need one. Please let me know and I will find a way to get it to you once they arrive.

I'd like to close today with an adaptation of the Gratitude Meditation from meditationbrainwaves.com

Find yourself seated comfortably.

Gently close your eyes and breathe deeply....

Breathe deeply in through your nose... and exhale out from your mouth...

Begin to feel a deep sense of gratitude about things in your life...

Breathe in and out...

You may feel grateful for something you have, so bring into your mind those objects you are grateful for such as your house and your bed...

Breathe deeply, as you imagine these things...

As you exhale, either in your mind or quietly to yourself say, "thank you."

Breathe in and out...

Express gratitude for those in your life...the people and even animals to rise in your mind...

See them clearly, breathe deeply into your imagination...

As you exhale, either in your mind or quietly to yourself say, "thank you."

Breathe in and out...

Become grateful for yourself... your health, your wisdom, your kindness...

Be grateful for your ability to love others...

Breathe in deeply, imagining that you can give yourself a big hug and whisper, "thank you."

Take a nice breath in and be grateful for your breath, bringing you life...

Letting your breath just fall away... when you exhale, feeling your body sinking deeper into relaxation...

Now, take some time to focus on the world around you and feel even more gratitude...

All you have to do is think about the things you are grateful for and then they expand and grow...

Really feel yourself as you are...

Not as you expect you should be, just be thankful for who you truly are...

Derive pleasure from all your senses...

For the fact is that we can truly enjoy the things we have, and we don't need anything else...

We already have everything we need to make the most of our time here on earth. Be grateful for your existence because you are here, you are present, you are everything that the world needs ...

Good...

Bring into your mind's eye all of that which swells your heart with love ...

Focus on the sounds, sights, smells and feelings ...

Feel that tingle on your skin that is the uncontrollable response to being in the presence of beauty and all of the awareness of love ...

Reside in that moment of love for the next 3 breaths...

in and out...

in and out...

in and out...

Now breathe in, and as you breathe, feel the beauty of all these things growing inside of you...

Breathe out and allow these things to grow so large that they force out anything that takes your energy and your peace...

Bring all of your awareness to your heart, and the love that you carry with you for all these things you might sometimes forget you have..... you carry them with you at all times within your heart...

As you continue to breathe, recognize the strength that focusing on these things brings you ...

And imagine your brightness intensifying to the maximum degree... and when you breathe out you recharge Relaxing...

Allow the brightness to build with every breath in...

See yourself twinkling like a star...

Now, hear yourself saying these words with conviction:

I'm grateful for this moment...

I embrace each day with gratitude...

I am grateful for my dreams and desires because I know that they are manifesting right now...

Every day I'm more mindful of the small blessings that I should be thankful for...

I am so grateful for discovering my ability to create the reality I love...

Each day I am grateful for the beauty of life...

I am thankful for each and every day...

I'm thankful for my ability to achieve anything I put my mind to...

I'm grateful for my friends and family...

Give thanks right now to anything and everything you can possibly think of...

Gently draw your awareness to the present moment, wiggle your toes and fingers, and open your eyes

Go about your day with a deep sense of gratitude.

Resources/Research

Let There Be Light by Elizabeth Sand Turner

Pg78:

The “better Hope” is the teaching of Jesus that emphasizes a closer relationship to God through love. The state of consciousness in which we recognize that there is a divine law and that it should be obeyed is not sufficient in and of itself. “The Law made nothing perfect.” it does, however, occupy a very important place in man’s unfoldment, for without an understanding of God as law there is no chance of generating the love to fulfill it.

Lessons In Truth by H. Emilie Cady

Pg138

The second indispensable condition to finding the secret palace and abiding in it is “my hope is from him”:

“For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.” -- Psalm 62:5

“Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our god is the salvation of Israel” (Jer. 3:23 KJV). It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Is your hope from Him, or is it from books or teachers or friends or meetings or societies?

“The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst” (Zeph. 3:15). Think of it -- in the midst of you -- at the center of your being this moment while you read these words. Say it, say it, think it, dwell on it, whoever you are, wherever you are! In the midst of you! Then what need for all this running around? What need for all this strained outreaching after Him?

“The Lord, your God, is in your midst [not just God in the midst of others, but in the midst of you, standing right where you are], a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing” (Zeph. 3:17). You are His love. It is you that He will rejoice in with singing if you will turn away from people to Him within you. His singing and joy will so fill you that your life will be a great thanksgiving.

The Lord is the Lord within our own benign. The Lord is the Christ of our own bring.

There is one Spirit, one FATHER of all, in us all, but who manifests uniquely in each of us. Your Lord is He who will deliver you out of all your troubles. Your Lord has no other business but to manifest Himself to you and through you, and so make you mighty with His own mightiness made visible, whole with His health, perfect by showing forth the Christ perfection.

Standing in the place of intellect or conscious mind, we thus look to Spirit. Spirit flows in and illumines intellect making it see its oneness with Spirit; and then we -- conscious mind -- stand at the center, and, looking from within outward say, “The Father and I are one.”

Let all your hope be from your Lord. Let your communion be with Him. Wait upon the inner abiding Christ often, just as you would wait upon any visible teacher. When you are sick “wait thou only upon God” (Ps. 62:5 KJV) as the Most High, rather than upon healers. When you lack wisdom in small or large matters, “wait though only upon God, “ and see what marvelous wisdom for action will be given you. When desiring to speak the word that will deliver another from the bondage of sickness or sin or sorrow, “wait though only upon God” and exactly the right word will be given you, and power will go with it, for it will be alive with the power of Spirit.

A Christmas to Remember: Hope/Faith First Sunday of Advent

For so many of us, last Christmas was much different than those of years past. Traditions were put on hold. Most of us were grounded, unable to travel, missing the activities and festivities of a

season usually full of bustle and crowds. Last year, we visited over the phone and saw one another on screens. It was only natural to feel disappointed as travel plans were scrapped and we were unable to welcome one another into our homes.

We accepted the changes and felt nostalgic for the visits of years past, hoping 2021 would bring a return to the traditions we treasured and the friends and family we missed. The hope that carried us through last Christmas may have been just a flicker in consciousness, a distant light on the horizon that this year would be better. But that hope inspired the faith that life is unfolding in an orderly way, that peace, love, and joy are more enduring than loneliness, disappointment, and sadness could ever be. Faith helped us adapt to a time we never imagined having to live through.

It's easy, isn't it, to keep faith in the goodness of God when life is giving us what we expect? Even when we get sidetracked or disappointed, it's possible to imagine coming out on the other side of a breakup, a job loss, or a minor illness or injury. But leaning into faith is especially necessary when tough times just keep getting tougher and the end isn't in sight.

This Christmas may not constitute a full return to life as it was, but it will likely start to come close. We have grown strong in the time between then and now. The hope that kept us going this time last year is now faith, a complete knowing that the very nature of life - of God - is wholeness and goodness.

This Christmas season comes bearing an unlikely but hard-earned gift. The more hardships we endured, the longer we waited, the more creatively we coped - the more we grew in faith. Hope was a good place to start, but it could take us only so far. We had to flex the spiritual muscle of faith to see ourselves and one another through. And now we're much closer to the smiles, hugs, and laughter we have longed for. These are fruits of our faith.

"Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong." -- 1 Corinthians 16:13

On this day of Advent, I remember to stand in the power of my faith.

Daily Word Sunday, November 28, 2021

Hope/Faith

This Advent, my hope leads me to unwavering faith in God.

My belief in goodness -- of the world, others, myself, and God -- begins with hope. Maybe hope is all I can muster after a period of doubt or disappointment. As I feel hopeful, I begin to believe that new possibilities and better outcomes are available to me. My hopeful feelings lead to faith, a certainty that the goodness I could only sense before is the actual nature of life. With faith, I now direct my thoughts toward goodness, wholeness, and my heart's desires.

With gratitude for my awakening, I use faith to dismantle doubt and limitation. I hold only the best thoughts for myself.

I know and feel in the depth of my soul that the good I desire is already mine. With unwavering faith and deep gratitude I claim it now.

"For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him." --Psalm 62:5