

Lifting Our Sails to Grace Meditation and Message 6-26-22 Rev Brigid

This quote by Robert Sardello frames our time of meditation today:

*"When we have cleared a space for the presence of Silence [capital S silence] to enter into whatever we are doing, we feel the presence of grace in our lives. When we have gotten to the point of feeling the **desire of Silence** and can call to heart that feeling when we are about to begin our day and our work, we feel graced."*

So as we enter into our time of meditation, I invite you to listen to the voice of your body, and wiggle, stretch or shift if you need and then settle in wherever you are sitting. Take a deep breath in... and let it out with a sigh... and again...

Close your eyes if that's comfortable, or simply soften your gaze, relaxing the muscles of your face, letting all expression soften and tension melt away...

Feel your feet grounded, resting on the floor... sense your seat rooted, your whole body supported... and as your shoulders relax, let your hands rest on your lap or at your side, palms facing up, gently cupped to receive...

When we have cleared a space for the presence of Silence...

There's nothing *you* have to do.

There's nothing you *have* to do.

There's nothing you have to *do*. But gently breathe...

I am blessed... I am grateful...I receive...the presence of Silence

There's nothing *you* have to do.

There's nothing you *have* to do.

There's nothing you have to *do*... And yet, we also as a community we continually ask in service of transforming the world around us-- WHAT IS MINE TO DO?

*"When we have cleared a space for the presence of Silence [capital S silence] to enter into whatever we are doing, we feel the presence of grace in our lives. When we have gotten to the point of feeling the **desire of Silence** and can call to heart that feeling when we are about to begin our day and our work, we feel graced."*

I loved how those words were in conversation with the lines from Catherine of Siena: God's grace, unsought and unearned, blows through my life,
and all I need to do is raise my sails to catch the full wind.

As I've said many, many times, this process of writing a message that I hope will offer some point of inspiration becomes one of my spiritual practices. This week as I searched out passages about grace, it began to feel like a conversion with those inner roommates who freak out about the state of the world, and writers from across the ages who offer wisdom in the midst of how life can feel like one storm a'comin' after another.

Actually, it was like a lively dinner party in my mind, with the voices of Robert Sardello, Catherine of Siena and Eric Butterworth and many others who generously pointed to the small moments of my life this week when I could see the Sea of Amazing Grace around me.

From Eric Butterworth:

The word grace means favor. Why are you favored as a child of God?
Simply because you are the activity of God expressing... as you.

God's will for you is so intense, so continuous, that it even filters through your willfully closed mind.

You are not a helpless creature bobbing about like a cork on the seas of life, at the mercy of the storms of fate and circumstance. (Can you just picture Catherine of Siena saying, Yes, that's exactly what I just said!)

You are the very self-livingness of God. When you desire spiritual growth, it is God who has first desired it in you. When you make an extra effort in your work, it is the divine urge in you that is working through you. You are not simply a subject of God, with God making notations of sin and error, or of good, in his big black book. You are the activity of God in expression, beloved with an everlasting love.

Living in a state of grace is an expression often used to imply that the person has earned God's favor. It may be made to appear that by joining a church, or accepting a particular religious cliché, you get something special ... that it's like knowing someone at City Hall who arranges to "fix" parking tickets.

Living in a state of grace can mean nothing more nor less than living in a disciplined awareness of the divine flow. God's flow is constant. Our experience of it changes with our consciousness...

Grace, as the divine favor, the activity of God's love, is working for you constantly. It is not dependent upon any special faith or prayer on your part. Like the buoyancy of water that will keep you afloat even when you try to force yourself under—grace fulfills divine law by sustaining you in spite of yourself.

So, how do we recognize the buoyancy of grace, lift our sails to the winds of grace, make space for the presence of grace, and know that we live in The Divine flow that is working for us constantly?

Here are some of the ways I lifted my sails this week, and as I share these moments, I invite you to call to your heart-mind those moments when grace, though invisible like the wind, made its presence known to you.

- On Tuesday, the Board of Trustees gathered for 5 hours of retreat here in this sanctuary. Our guiding questions were:
 - What does it mean that being on the board is a spiritual practice?
 - If we are holders of the trust, and holders of the consciousness of this community, how are we filling our wells, so that our DOING flows from our BEING?

As we shared with each other what was active-- and what was missing-- in our own spiritual practices, we recognized that what wants to be happening in us as a leadership team is because something wants to be happening in our larger community, and in the world. The Board of Trustees, as Heather so beautifully put it, are not *creating* the consciousness of this church-- we are holding it, reflecting it, expressing it--and being carried by it.

The grace of those hours together was in creating the opening to the flow of energy, inspiration and accountability that will help us be sound vessels for all of us. We say “we are a spirit- centered community” and we try to live that truth. As a leadership team, we made a commitment to each other and to ourselves to grow our daily spiritual practices.

20/20/20 or 5/5/5 or 10/10/10 :-D This concept was transformative when my lovely doctor in Massachusetts invited me to try the STRUCTURE AND FREEDOM of taking **20 minutes of movement, 20 minutes of quiet prayer, meditation, or reflection and 20 minutes of anything else that fed my soul!** As a Board, we’re trying this as a symbol of our commitment to our own spiritual practices, and and the anchor of accountability in community

- Grace is Circulation day! Releasing that which we no longer need creates room for what wants to appear-- or simply creates room, space, a sense of opening in our lives. Circulating our goods to those who need this very item we've released is good for our psyches and spirits, and good for our Mother Earth! The spirit of service, generosity and friendship alive in our Unity family spread its buoyancy throughout our neighborhood yesterday.
- Grace is recognizing the interweaving of lives that touch mine-- it's visits with dear friends, catching up on life and filling our sails together. It's family-- the one I was born into, the one I raised, the one I created through those deep friendships that sustain me.
- Grace is sitting on my back deck in the morning with a cup of coffee, hearing the birdsong, listening to the hum of traffic and neighborhood noises as harmony to the sound of the trees. And feeling the simple joy and gratitude of knowing how privileged and blessed I am in this moment, just as it is.

Living in a state of grace doesn't mean we never again face hardships, loss, frustrations, reckonings with the ways of the world. It simply means we have the ability to face it all with courage, with dignity, with awareness, knowing we are held in grace, filled with grace, vessels of grace. Again, from Eric Butterworth:

Grace is simply a wonderful facet of the activity of God in you. It is not something you must work for or develop. It simply is. It is an assurance, an explanation of why things are never quite hopeless, and why we never receive the full harvest of the error we sow, and why we always receive a little more good than we earn.

...you are the activity of God expressing... as you... You are the very self-livingness of God. IN EVERY MOMENT. We are the convergence of fully, and temporarily (thank you Rev Jim!) human, and fully divine.

We each must answer *What is mine to do as the self-livingness of God expressed in me*. In the face of our Holy Heartbreak, inspired by our Holy Imagination to transform the world by our Holy Rebellion, and by our love in action-- grace is the gift of Divine Wind that grounds our service, our activism, in the sacred.

I'll close with this prayer-poem by Stephanie Dowrick in **Heaven on Earth: Timeless Prayers of Wisdom and Love**. May it be a reminder to trust that God's grace, unsought and unearned, is *expressed in us, through us and as us* in every moment.

God's Grace

May I open to the ease and comfort of God's grace.

May I remember the quiet times when something shifted within me, and I grew in grace.

May I remember the moments of kindness when my heart opened, and I grew in grace.

May I remember when I reached beyond my own worries to help another, and I grew in grace.

May I remember the times of darkness when inspiration arose, and I grew in grace.

May our world be filled with moments of grace.

May we bring grace to life through our daily actions.

May everyone live in grace, happiness and peace.

May I live in grace, happiness and peace.

May I embody grace.

*May I remember when I reached beyond my own
worries to help another, and I grew in grace.*

*May I remember the times of darkness when inspiration arose,
and I grew in grace.*

May our world be filled with moments of grace.

May we bring grace to life through our daily actions.

May everyone live in grace, happiness and peace.

May it be so. And so it is. Amen.