

Meditation:

Centering in, eyes closed or softly gazing just in front of you, focus your attention on your breath... simply noticing the rhythm of your inhale and exhale, and knowing that within just a few breaths our individual breath rhythm in and out will entrain with each other, reminding us of our interconnectedness...

Sense your body supported, grounding in by noticing the physical sensation of where your body is touching where you sit, letting your hands fall open to receive sensing your palms and backs of your fingers

HANDS (sense the hands open, resting on your lap or at your side– sense back, palm, fingers, whole hand...

Whole left hand– visualize placing a fear, something that angers or worries you, a doubt, a sadness– feel it hovering just over your hand...grief sits here with me; fear sits here with me; anger sits here with me, feel that emotion sitting gently in the palm of your left hand

Whole right hand– visualize placing a moment you felt loved, felt trust, or peace, or a simple joy– feel it too hovering just over your hand... joy sits here with me; loving kindness sits here with me; trust sits here, peace sits here with me...feel that emotion sitting gently in the palm of your right hand

Bring your hands together, palms facing each other but not quite touching– sense the energy there, the paradox of being able to hold, to sense both... fear and love; joy and grief; anxiety and peace

TONGLEN–

Now, breathing in... and out...connect to everyone in this room or watching from home who may in this very moment be experiencing whatever arose in you... and feel yourself connected in this space... now widen your awareness to include all those experiencing this same emotion in This city Our state

Our country Anywhere and everywhere

And feel your connection, your shared human experience and know you are not alone..

Inspiration for Message: What *does* Love ask of us?

Excerpt from **The Question**, by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

All day, I replay these words:

Is this the path of love?

...Amazing how

quickly six words become compass,

the new lens through which to see myself

in the world. I notice what the question is not.

Not, “*Is this right?*” Not,

“*Is this wrong?*”

...All day,

I let myself be led by the question.

All day I let myself not be too certain

of the answer. ...

Is this the path of love? ...

What *does* Love ask? Here’s what Jesus had to say about it:

Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard the Sadducees disputing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”

Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’ — this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Diana Butler Bass, describes a conversation about this passage:

Yesterday, at the hotel where I'm staying in Minneapolis, I was talking with another guest. She asked what I was doing in the city. I replied that I was preaching this weekend at a Methodist church. She didn't run away (that's good!) and instead queried, "What are you preaching?"

"The reading this week is a great one!" I exclaimed happily. "Perfect for the weekend before this election: Love your neighbor as yourself."

She laughed. "Good thought. The world would be better if everybody did that." She paused and added, "But what if your neighbor is an axe murderer?"

"An axe murderer?" I replied. "I was thinking about my neighbor with the leaf blower! Or the one who put up a security light that shines in my bedroom. I can't say I love those neighbors."

I suspect that's why "no one dared to ask Jesus any question" after Jesus made this neighbor comment. Loving your neighbor is the most important, most beautiful, most ethically obvious biblical thing to proclaim. This is Jesus' central teaching.

And it is nearly impossible to live. Because we all can immediately think of exceptions to the rule.

- Who are YOUR exceptions to the rule?
- I had a conversion this week with a young woman in her mid-thirties. Her dad has a very different world view than she does, and after listening to him on the phone one afternoon in a particularly charged rant about "those people" had to remind him, "*I am those people, dad*"... She went on to recount holidays growing up where the extended family gathered happily over the turkey and mashed potatoes and the differences in political persuasions just were not an issue. The differences were *known* but the abiding family connection was the primary experience. That has changed in these polarizing days, and her heart was heavy.

- My response to listening to her? Grief at her sadness. And then a flare of righteous indignation at ***those people, and their divisive rhetoric!!***

Diana Butler Bass goes on to say:

“But the biblical response — the deeply spiritual response — to this teaching is silence.

The followers of Jesus don’t try to interpret Jesus’ command or dim its challenge. Instead, followers of Jesus let these clear, simple words call us to live in such a loving fashion that we eventually learn that we ourselves can be part of the problem when we seek a truly neighborly world.

Silence — the deep recognition of our own complicity in the challenge of loving our neighbors — shouldn’t keep us from the moral calling to do so. Indeed, silence compels us to reach beyond the limits of our hidden bigotries and quiet hatreds to act on Jesus’ command.

In an interview for Center for Activism and Contemplation, Sikh activist and author **Valarie Kaur** places love at the center of our ability to bring about wholeness in a divided world:

What does it mean to return to a kind of wholeness where the way that we love informs what we do in the world and what we do in the world deepens our love?... (*Is THIS the path of Love?*)

...as much as we must fight for our convictions and stand for what is just, remember that...after Election Day or Inauguration Day. We have to find a way to live together still. The only way we will birth a multiracial democracy is if we hold up a vision of a future that leaves no one behind, not even our worst opponents. ...[Philosopher] Hannah Arendt says isolation breeds radicalization. [1] You might be the person to puncture the [social media] algorithm, **to sit in spaces of deep listening**—...You risk being changed by what you hear.

...We have to create [those spaces].... Oftentimes it means listening over time, being in relationship. ... If you ... really wonder “Why?,” beneath the slogans and the soundbites, you’ll hear the person’s story and you’ll see their wound. You’ll

see their grief. You'll see their rage. You might not agree with it, but I've come to understand that there are no such things as monsters in this world, only human beings who are wounded, who act out of their fear or insecurity or rage. That does not make them any less dangerous, but once we see their wound, they lose their power over us. And we get to ask ourselves: How do we want to take that information into what we do next? (*Is THIS the path of Love?*)

I invite people to take their wounds [and] their opponents' wounds into spaces of re-imagination—of imagining an outcome, a policy, a relationship that leaves no one outside of our circle of care, not even “them.” This kind of labor, this kind of revolutionary love, it's not the sacrifice of an individual, **it's a practice of a community.**

Love God with your whole heart, your whole mind and your whole strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. Self love is setting healthy boundaries, not being a doormat. Yet love also asks us to transform our own righteous indignation into working for the transformation of our world. So let's pay attention to how voting FOR what we value invites us to be involved in the civic life of our community, and our country, and beyond.

For a Promise

~ Brigid Beckman

*after Rosemeerry Wahtola Trommer's
“Dear America”*

Dear America,
I am your daughter.
I have lived in your cities and small
towns
walked your beaches, hiked your hills.
My ancestors came to your shores
hungry for hope,
believing a dream, a promise.
My uncle left his life
back on those other shores at 19
in a war that did *not* end all wars.
I have taught your children
and cared for your elders.

I have raised my voice and rolled up my
sleeves.
I love you America. You have made me.
Love the dream of you.
Love you despite
how that dream
has been a nightmare for too many.
I love that my vote is my voice
and that it is not the end of the song
but only a beginning.
And once again,
the waking dream calls me
to listen
to that voice I hear in my dreams-
the future's children calling me.
Hungry for peace.
Hungry for hope.
Hungry for a promise.