

Meditation:

*Centering in, notice breath, sense the physical sensation
of your body held wherever you are sitting
opening to the experience of peace and love found within the silence,
peace surrounding you,
love flowing to you and from you,
opening to awareness of your divine nature,
let the sound and silence wash over you, leading you deeply within...*

Peace, be still.

And so it is. Amen.

Message notes and inspiration:

One of my favorite aspects of the Unity classes I've taken with Rev Kelly Isola is that she frames each class with this statement: QUESTION EVERYTHING! She wants us to treat what she offers— AND HOW WE RECEIVE IT- with an open hearted, open minded curiosity: to try it on, experiment with the ideas, see how they land in our lived experience, and then be open to growing past our own initial reaction/understanding.

As I've come to appreciate our shared Unity path, that feels like a foundational teaching. That's very much how I see my spiritual curiosity regarding these challenging teachings from Fr. John Dear (D-E-A-R! 😊) So I invite you along for the ride. Take in this way of hearing the familiar words of the Beatitudes as a way of being empowered to live in non-violence, like Jesus our wayshower. See how my journey lands in your heart and mind, and don't take my word for it. Do your own spiritual experimentation, and if you'd like, let me know how it goes!

In case you weren't here for part 1 last week, or as someone reminded me with complete honesty— "I don't always remember what you talked about"- here is a short refresher that will help frame today's message.

From *The Gospel of Peace* by John Dear

To understand the Beatitudes, it's helpful to remember that they were originally spoken in the ancient language of Aramaic not in Greek or Hebrew. ... Instead of beginning with the familiar phrase, 'Blessed are you'... they should each begin with the phrase, 'Arise and walk forth.' Imagine how empowering Jesus's Beatitudes would be if in fact they each began, "Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something, you who are poor, mournful, meek, hungering for justice, merciful, peacemaking, and persecuted! "

This...non-violent Jesus: ...empowers poor, oppressed, rural Galileans to get up, get moving and **live out their calling** as the sons and daughters of the God of peace, to live ... as non-violent campaigners commissioned to disarm everyone and prepare for God's reign of peace on earth.

Hear the Beatitudes this morning in the way I shared them at the *end* of my message last week as a reminder that we too are empowered and commissioned to both be blessed, and to EMBODY the blessing as we arise and walk forth.

Matthew 5: 1 - 12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him and he began to teach them saying:

““Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something, you who remember that God is your source, you poor in spirit; live knowing the kingdom of heaven is here.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something, you who weep and mourn; live AS the compassion and comfort of God.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something you who are meek; live knowing the reign of God is now.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something you who hunger and thirst for justice and are merciful; work for God’s justice and mercy now.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something, you who embody the pure heart of God; live knowing you are the hands and heart and eyes of God.”

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something you who are the peacemakers; your sacred presence stands up, speaks up, works for peace in all ways; you are the beloved sons and daughters of God.”

As I said, I’ll be prayerfully working with the Beatitudes, exploring passages that **make my heart sing– or stumble!** This morning, I want to focus on the passage: *Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God*, and explore what reading this book and praying with this beatitude has invoked in me.

In ***The Beatitudes of Peace***, John Dear writes:

“Purity of heart remains one of the most elusive goals and clearest demands of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus points us to an inner innocence and childlike wonder that keeps us open to the presence of God... This beatitude alone is worth a lifetime of study, a lifelong spiritual search...

When Jesus calls us to purity of heart, he's calling us to an inner journey toward an ever widening heart of love and compassion for all others, all creation, and the Creator...Purity of heart is a process, a way of life, not a static goal... When understood this way, this beatitude becomes an exciting invitation to an inner journey of love, compassion, non-violence, and peace...

...All of the world's evils and all that is good...come from within us. The spiritual life is the daily, ongoing exercise of our hearts. ... We stretch them... and strengthen them for goodness, kindness, love, compassion, non-violence, justice, mercy, and peace. Because our hearts belong to God, we surrender them to God.

People who care about justice, mercy and peace need to dig deep into our own hearts to explore the roots of violence within us in pursuit of inner disarmament. Through our pursuit and practice of inner peace, inner nonviolence, and inner purity, we discover how deep the roots of violence go.... we engage in a lifetime of inner work, which no one may ever know about. We meditate daily and contemplate the God of Peace. We give God all our inner violence, injustice, resentment, bitterness, anger and warmaking and allow God to disarm our hearts.

To be a person of peace, love, and nonviolence is to be at peace within ourselves... In other words, as we cultivate non-violence of the heart, and root all we do in our relationship with [and I'd add, our embodiment as unrepeatable expressions of] the God of Peace, we begin to see God everywhere– in the beauty of creation, and the wonder of all creatures, in the faces of children, and those around us. We see God in the struggle for justice and peace, in the poor and marginalized, in our enemies, in ourselves. This purity of heart, this inner non-violence, helps us to see with the eyes of peace and love... Jesus invites us to plumb the inner depths of love and peace and see God everywhere.

“Arise, get up, get moving, start walking, walk forth and do something, you who embody the pure heart of God; **live knowing you are the hands and heart and eyes of God.**”

- It is SO easy for me to point my eyes outward to the violence and destruction of lives that I read about in the news. Every day it feels as

though the news cycle is more frightening, more cruel, and it is so easy to point to “Those people” as the evil, as the culprits, and to feel powerless to change the course of our culture of violence.

- The “stumble” aspect of this chapter is John Dear’s insistence that having a pure heart, a heart of peace, nonviolence, compassion, mercy– a heart that practices what I preach- is a lifetime pursuit. I can’t just check a box, done!
- Here is the paradox I have been sitting with: we ARE pure of heart. That is how we come into this present existence, it is our true nature, it is the capital T- Truth of our being unrepeatable expressions as divine sparks of the Creator.
- AND we are fully human, enculturated– soaked in a culture of violence that too often pits “us” against “them.” In our humanness we find our inner resentments, inner violence can be invisible to our own eyes– or turn into a steady refrain of negative self-talk, fearful, angry and limiting. Or it’s easy to bypass and say, “at least I’m not as bad as them.”
- I hear the words of this beatitude– and how it weaves with the rest– as a call to stare unflinchingly into my heart. To pluck the log from my own eye before I point to the splinter in my neighbor’s eye. To do my inner work.
- I hear these words as a reminder to see both my shine and my shadow, with eyes of innocence and childlike wonder, with tender curiosity and self-compassion. And to see YOUR shine and shadow in the same light.
- Then I hear these words as a reminder that I am commissioned to ARISE and WALK FORTH! BE pure of heart. Let my eyes be the eyes of Love. Let my hands be the hands of love. Let me bring that loving, pure heart to MY work in the world: to stand up, to speak up, to show up for the poor, for my neighbors, so that justice and mercy and compassion and peace reign NOW. Let the ongoing revelation of the reign of the God of Peace begin NOW, TODAY, moment by moment, choice by choice.

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