

Meditation:

In this moment, in this place remember who you are
breathe in gratitude, breathe out gratitude

Letting fear and worry fall away
breathe in, and out and pray your thanks

Go inside and quiet your mind
Breathe in, trust the blessing
Breathe out, know there is only love and all is well

Taking a deeper breath or two, come back gently to the room, gratefully bringing
with you the gifts found in shared quiet and stillness.

Message:

This morning when I woke up at 3:45, tired but on holy fire from preaching to Congress in my dreams, I looked at the time and groaned. My grief and rage from these past months in our country fed those dreams in all caps: “WHY ARE WE STILL PAYING YOU WHEN FURLOUGHED WORKERS ARE NOT PAID AND YOU STILL GET YOUR PER DIEM WHEN YOU’RE DENYING PEOPLE FOOD AND AND WHY DO YOU GET FREE HEALTH CARE FOR LIFE AND YET YOU’RE DENYING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE WHY AND WHY AND WHY!!!!!!

So how is this a talk on “Where do we find gratitude?” 😊 All week as I considered my theme– part one of a 3 part journey with gratitude and gratefulness– I found myself noticing moments when gratitude snuck up on me, or was completely obvious. So when I couldn’t fall back to sleep, I took my own good advice– that I’m going to lay out in a few minutes– and I counted my blessings. I reviewed those moments in my week that opened the door to a grateful heart– and added gratitude anticipating a nap later this afternoon!

Here are just a few of them:

- This weekend marks my 4th anniversary of being here, co-creating a beloved community with Unity of Albany!
- My daughter-in-law accidentally left her good dress boots behind when they left on Saturday. So on Monday, we met halfway for lunch and deep, sometimes teary conversation about her mom and how the loss unfolds each day.. And we laughed-a lot- as she told me about Keeley's *insistence* the whole way home on Saturday that now that Halloween is over, it's *definitely* Christmas *today* so we have to get a tree! I am grateful for that 4 year old, for the laughter, the tears, our connection, the way all of this makes me appreciate *my* mother-in-law all over again...
- I'm grateful for moments of deepening friendship, the lovely feeling of "coming to know you" that happens over shared conversation during a lovely shared meal
- I'm grateful for the sacred libation of a great cup of coffee! And for the "texting machines" that sometimes act as a phone so I can have a cuppa with my Beth, even across the miles
- On Wednesday when the ebb and flow of this cold clobbered me, working from home gave me time to attend the whole UWM Annual meeting on Zoom with 1100 other people around the country. At 4 hours long, it was not always riveting, but it was a powerful reminder of our connection to a larger community working with Spirit and I'm deeply grateful for that.

So, what? What does it matter to find a handful of reasons to be grateful for my own good moments, when there is so much suffering happening all around me? Why does it matter that we find a way to be grateful for something, even in the times that are dark with challenge and confusion? How even in the midst of great sorrow, can there be gratitude for myriad small moments?

I love this quote by Rabbi Harold Kushner: *“If you concentrate on finding whatever is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.”*

Rabbi Kushner's words remind me that sometimes we have to *find the good*. Sometimes that feels so easy and sometimes it can be incredibly challenging. But I also want to land with the phrase "nurturing the soul." Looking for the good—***the presence of GOD***—in every situation is how we nurture our souls. Then from that awakened-soul-capital P-presence we find the ways our soul calls us to work for compassion and justice in the world.

With our souls nourished, we then live in trust that God, Source, Love is always and in all ways co-creating with us and as us for the highest good. I'm touched over and over by the good I see in this community. I'm grateful for the myriad ways we continue to show up, to support and challenge each other to awaken and transform our own inner lives, and then bring that to the outer.

Over the next few weeks we lead up to a Thanksgiving that will be marked by millions of people going without SNAP benefits. Marked by MOST federal employees who are furloughed by the shut down are not getting paid. Marked as a holiday where it's too easy to forget our country's complex history as we tell a myth of how that first Thanksgiving.

Yet a practice of giving thanks, a practice of finding the God/good in every circumstance, a practice of gratefulness is a way to nourish our own souls, *and the soul of our communal life*. So in this lead up over the next few weeks here is my invitation to us. Look for the good. Take note of where you can give thanks. Pay attention and with intention, turn your thanks back to God, as Jesus, our Wayshower did over and over again.

- So what are your small moments that lead you to being grateful?
- What is some small thing in your home that brings you joy?
- What could you give to someone else to make them smile? Who made you smile today?
- Can you notice something to enjoy about the changing colors of November or something that you are thankful for in nature?
- Is there some way to be grateful that the sorrows of the world, your holy rage and grief are calling you to be more present, to more fully show up AS love in action?
- Can you be grateful for any small comforts in your life— a cozy chair, a cup of tea, a favorite book, a chat with a friend?

And if you are one of those millions who are thrust into the fear and despair over losing benefits that have kept your head barely above water, can your gratitude for being part of a loving community give you the courage to reach out to us for help? We will keep your needs confidential, and do what we can to help. We may not be able to do more than point you in the right direction for greater help, but we are part of the safety net of love that holds all of us together.

From Oren Jay Sofer: *In an economy built on extraction, generosity is an act of resistance. Every time we share, we say: There is enough. We belong to one another. When systems fail, reach toward each other. In community is strength, resilience, and renewal. We can do this—together.*

In community is the Amazing Grace of strength, resilience and renewal. There is enough. There is only love, a love that heals and sets us free. May we find gratitude in unexpected places. May our souls be nourished by seeing God in every circumstance. And may we step fully into the flow of Divine love alive in us, through us and AS us. Amen!