

April 7, 2024

Pr. Steve

Texts: 1 John 1: 1-2:2; Acts 4: 32-35; Psalm 133; John 20: 19-31

In the name of God, Abba/Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Christ is risen! [Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!] As I promised, Easter, pt. 2.

Fully alive—that is God's greatest desire for us—to be fully alive. That is the glory of God. And it is for a 'New Humanity' as I said last week—not a new religion—a 'New Humanity' that Christ was crucified, and now has been brought to the fullness of resurrecting love for the whole of humanity. How does that happen?

Today, I'd like to speak about three areas. The first is Contemplation.

We heard in this beautiful passage, 1 John, how from before the beginning that One, the very Word of Life, has now come among us as one of us. It's both beautiful and a baffling mystery. How is that possible? This One comes in order to give us life, to raise us up. God lives deep within each of us. As the center of love, God would permeate every aspect of our being with that love.

But most of the time we're blind—we're too busy, we're preoccupied, we've got better things to do, we're distracted. And we chase, and we chase, and we chase after everything—hoping it brings us fulfillment. The chaos of the outer world, so disruptive, so brutal these days is coming from the inner chaos of every one of us. It's just spilling over. That's all it is—delusion after delusion.

Archbishop Rowan Williams of the Anglican Church said a few years ago, '*If we want to be alive, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to this unreal and insane world—run by our financial systems, our marketing culture, and the chaos of our own internal emotions running amok. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need. To pray, to meditate, to contemplate, is to learn what we need, so that we can live truthfully, honestly, and lovingly.*'

Today, our lives are run by labels, numbers, symbols, slogans, passwords (do you remember all of yours?) and algorithms—they finally arrived. We have algorithms to help determine reality—all of these endless classifications and categories. We don't fill in boxes anymore, we are the boxes. (How many boxes have you got? How many live inside of you? Come on, fess up. What are your favorite boxes?)

Life and death depend upon everything, except who we are. And that's why life is so painful—why we're all feeling so alone and alienated, because who we are just doesn't seem to matter to anyone else. Thankfully we don't feel it, do we? And our friends and our family and our kids, they don't feel it either. Do you really matter? Or is it just the boxes that count?

Next realm—Evolution.

Evolution is not the enemy. The term was coined by a Catholic priest in the 17th century—evolution. Our scriptures in Hebrew call it 'creationing'. When God set the 'creationing' in motion, it was filled with abundance and joy and beauty overflowing. Oh, just stand in awe of the magnificence of where we live and who we are. The very earth itself, the entire cosmos, is a gift of boundless love—not boundless power. (That's where Oppenheimer got it wrong.)

Boundless love. Have you ever stood in our gardens here at Peace? Boundless—even Ken is amazed by what's growing—he can't comprehend it. Life is given from the pure generosity of God. That's another name for God—pure generosity—without control or control mechanisms.

Now, we are desperate for control, aren't we? But not God—giving life, boundless love—the unfolding dynamics of evolution from the subatomic to the astrophysical, that endless energy/matter dance. You know, they just keep going back and forth, right? This is incredible. And then the mind came into existence, and now we think we have a right, because we have technology, and that will get us control over our lives. *Right? Can I get an Amen? Finally, we'll have the control we need.*

This is just a passing phase, friends. Evolution is about the unfolding of consciousness, the capacity to understand the whole, which leads to this Spirit who moves us into love—to understand that we're here to care for and practice that caring which leads to the God, who is love all in all. That's what St. Paul said 2,000 years ago. *'The fullness of the creation, the fullness of God is love all in all.'* [1 Corinthians 15:8] That's where we're headed. That's where we're headed.

You see, the question is no longer to be or not to be. No, the question now is to be with or not to be with. Will we be in relationship, reverencing life that leads to caring beyond ourselves, and not merely consumed with how long our days on this planet are? Will we live in a relationship or not? To be with, or not be with? Where do we draw the line? See, this is the New Humanity, the *Bar Anasha*, for which Christ gave his life, raising up a New Humanity

We are integral to life. Human beings are not optional. Now, I know there's popular theories out there—*evolution will keep going [and] finally get rid of all the human beings. Won't that be a great day? Because we're the problem. We're the ones interfering.* That's nonsense. That's superficial shallowness. We are embracing, embodying the capacity to care for everything that is—each other, our families and beyond, the earth itself. That's our calling. We get to fall in love with everything.

It took Christ being crucified to begin to persuade us that *'Maybe that's why we're here.'* And nothing short of resurrecting love is breathing that into us now, as we pay attention. We are not optional. We are the fullness of God's happening, here and now, if we choose to say 'Yes'.

We still get to make choices. That's how crazy God is, saying, 'Make decisions about your life and how you live.' 'What would you like to do with your life?' 'What would you like to create now?' God is madly in love with you. What shall we do with that love?

Contemplation, Evolution = Creationing, and Social Transformation. Only hearts in love will see God's world as filled with love.

### Social Transformation

We have this weird text in the Book of Acts today [Acts 4: 32-35], don't we? Talk about strange! In the early church, they all came together, and the people sold their possessions, their property, their homes, and they gave the money to the community for the good of the whole, and no one had any needs anymore.

And we chant that in the Psalm [133], this great shalom, *'How lovely to live in harmony and unity.'* No, we say that'll never work. We could skip that one in the future, don't you think? It's just crazy. It's not going to happen.

God is in pain at our resistance to loving. *Only if we have the hearts of love can we see the world filled with love. Sin violates love—that's all there's to it, and anything that prevents or prohibits loving is a sin.*

At the Passover Seder, we spoke about the ninth plague—that of Darkness. And was that Darkness what prevented the Egyptians from seeing the humanity of the Hebrew slaves? Isn't that where we are today—this ugly, thick darkness, campaigning in broad daylight, unable to see the humanity of the other, unwilling, could care less.

The greatest sin in the world today—of the West, of Europe, of America, and now China—is the unmitigated arrogance toward all the rest of the people in the world: *'What do they matter? They're not like us. They don't produce like we do. Of what value are they? They don't fit in our quantification models. They don't matter to our algorithms. They don't matter to our categories, right? Who cares? Why should we care?'*

If we don't think it's that blatant, we're naive. The negativity and destruction is overwhelming.

So, my friends, the great voice of God comes to us in the mystery, in creation, in the Scriptures and sacraments, and from deep within our own hearts. But these days the voice of God can most clearly be heard through the voices and the experiences of the stranger, of the outcast, of the unnecessary, and of the abandoned. That's where God is hanging out.

So—come alive, come as you are, come to the New Humanity.

Amen.

The peace which surpasses all human understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.