

May 15, 2022

Pr. Steve

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

(Are you appreciating Melinda's gifts? She will get to be with us several times in the next couple of weeks. We're blessed. Thank you.)

Gandhi was a shy child, quiet, introvert, but smart, and in the course of time, his parents were able to send him to England to receive a full and proper English education, where he became a licensed barrister--lawyer--with all the rights and privileges. He was first assigned to work in South Africa, arrived there, and had to take a train journey to his destination. And that evening on the train, he presented his first class ticket for a berth in the sleeping car. And the conductor would have nothing to do with that.

'Who do you think you are? This ticket means nothing. Your British attire and apparel mean nothing. Your proper queen's English means nothing. Your highly educated credentials mean nothing. Either you go back to Third Class or I'll throw you off the train.'

Gandhi refused to go back [to Third Class]. They stopped the train--literally threw him off in the middle of nowhere. There was a platform--no town, no hotel, no coffee shop.

And Gandhi spent that night sitting out there freezing to death, and thinking on who he was as a human being. And when dawn came that next morning, he had seen through all of the nonsense. And he saw through, that no matter how great his qualifications in the British Empire, he would never, ever be seen as a human being.

'You, my friend, are nobody. Don't forget it.'

And this is what prompted his life's work--weeks, months ensuing--what eventually became the work of *Satyagraha*. Not just Non-violence: try not to hurt other people. *Satyagraha*: to press for the truth, to press for the truth. And Gandhi was inspired by the Bhagavad Gita and Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount*. In fact, Gandhi said years later, "*The only people who don't understand Jesus are the Christians.*" And Gandhi came to this insight--through that pressing for the truth--that the British are human beings too. In fact, he recognized their humanity before they did. He could see through.

I'm sure you've all seen images as well, that eventually he would wear only a *dhoti*, just a little wrap-around loin cloth. Winston Churchill used to constantly mock him as that "half-naked 'fakir'".

What was Gandhi saying? *You see this simplicity? This is what an impoverished Indian human being looks like. Can you see me?* We have to 'see through' to become human.

That was St. Francis experience, right? After years of depression and despair, the leper steps out in front of him. He goes into shock. He hated lepers until that moment--when he recognized the humanity of this human being. And with that, St. Francis recognized his own humanity (that was the only piece that had been missing), got off his horse and gave him a kiss. 'Now, I see. Now I see we're in this together--the suffering, the warped??, the disabled, the whole. Now, I see.'

Juliet Ward Howe, in that militant Mother's Day Proclamation (1870 I hope you read that in *Grace Waves* this week) could see through patriarchy, 1870! And I see the beauty of women in their talents, and qualifications, their integrity, and gifts being squandered by the games patriarchy is play. She could see through

Frederick Douglass could see through. No matter the qualifications of this elder and thinker and writer profound philosopher advisor to President Lincoln. He knew nobody would see him as a human being. *'You're nobody.'*

Who do you think understands slavery? The tens of hundreds of thousand people who were slave owners--or one slave? To see through. In order to create our humanity, we must see through.

Nelson Mandela, 27 years in prison. When he came out, he was one of the greatest reconcilers who ever lived because he could see not only the viciousness and the vile hatred evil of apartheid, but he saw it was destroying the oppressors and the white people as well. He saw their humanity. He showed us the purpose of politics.

Martin Luther King could see through the war machine, so we heard in that speech of a couple weeks ago *'Beyond Vietnam'*. Vietnam isn't the problem; it's a symptom. We're trying to do this everywhere--Burma, Peru, and Afghanistan, and Guatemala, countries in Africa, we're trying to control the whole thing. He could see through, but the powers-that-be didn't want the rest of us to see through. So, we took care of Martin, didn't we?

This vision of St. John today is not a poetic,
'My city will be nice when there's no more tears, and people aren't sad, and we can all get along. Wouldn't that be nice?'

In John's vision, he is seeing through. The old Heaven and the old Earth are dissolving. God has engaged us in the process of making everything new, and that is why tears and pain, and sorrow and suffering, and brokenness, and misery, and death--they will cease. Because of God's commitment to make everything new, including you and me.

And the means for accomplishing that. That's what the gospel is about today: *'Love one another.'*

That's the heart and core of everything. But here's the context there at the Passover meal. This sacred, sacred, holy meal revered for over 1000 years in Judaism. They're in the middle of this meal where God parted the waters. (You remember that part). And life became possible where there was none, and new life emerged out of death. Do you remember? Do you remember? Do you remember? That's our story. They say that year after year, and we do the same. This is our story.

Newness is coming--and we have to tell it at least once a year--because we keep forgetting. And Jesus says, *'This is me. It's what I'm about. It's what this meal is about—it's Passover liberation--because I'm making you new.'*

I know you keep forgetting. It's okay. [Jen's a little slow. We understand. She keeps forgetting.] But all right. The rest of us won't as well, we that we are in the process of being made new and whole by compassion that will not let go of us.

And right in the middle of that meal. Jesus is betrayed. Whew... I don't think there is any more violent act for human beings when somebody turns on you who's loved you, who has been a friend, and they put a knife in your back. We never forget that, do we?

Retaliate--seems pretty natural. But Jesus doesn't. He dismisses him. And knowing he's going to be dead in less than 24 hours, he says, *'Now I am I glorified. And God is glorified. And if God is glorified, we too shall be glorified.'*

What? What glory? It is the destruction of death by death, to be replaced by this unfathomable mercy which knows no end, which will see us through, which will carry us. The hearts of faith that trust we're being made new to make the whole creation new.

And as a parting gift, Jesus says,

'I'll give you a new commandment. Just love. Just love, love one another. Love as I have loved you. Keep on loving, no matter what. You'll be recognized as my disciples. But the truth is that if we don't love one another, we're all going to die. Because that's what we're doing when we don't love. We must dare to make peace, or we will die.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in 1934, five years before the War [WWII] began,

'We must dare to make peace. The hour is late. The moment is urgent. Will we commit ourselves? The machine is trampling everything. Will we dare to make peace?'

See war and machine and destruction of life, people without health care, education, without food, that trampling. That's just a machine. It doesn't need a heart. It doesn't need a center. It just tramples. It just needs part to keep going. That's why Ukraine offends us so much. It. Just wow, you don't like it, right?

We're overcome friends. Do you think anybody in Iraq, or Afghanistan experienced that for 20 years? Only we just couldn't see it. We must dare to make peace which comes from soulness--

from people who know that they're loved, and can practice this loving, which makes a life in the distance and hearts of others.

That soulfulness is what we need these days. We need to see it because right now we've got a fractured bunch of little souls and people who care, but we don't have the soulfulness to say, *'We will make creation new. We will make peace in our time. We will commit ourselves to peace.'* That's what's missing. Because war is wholehearted, peace doesn't work on half-heartedness.: *'I hope it comes...'* It doesn't 'love one another'; we've got to love one another.

Later in his life, Gandhi was called the Mahatma, the Great Soul, because he felt the soulful needs of all the people. And he embodied their cries and concerns, and turned it to create peace in his time, overthrowing the British Empire non-violently so there could be peace, and the humanity of his people could be recognized. The Mahatma. And Jesus, too. That great Mahatma, liberating people for centuries.

Love, love, love, love. You must love one another or die. God will see us through.

Thanks be to God.
Amen.

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