

July 3, 2022

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

“There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.”

There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.

I think this should become our mantra, huh?

That phrase was coined by A.J. Muste about six-seven decades ago. There's no way to peace. Peace is not out there somewhere--its fullness, its plan, there's a strategy, fix it. 'You know, someday it will happen...' There is no way--there is no way to peace. Peace is the way.

This is the heart of the Gospel. It's always about our embodying the love, and the grace, the mercy, and the peace which has been given us. It's got to become real. It has to be made flesh within us, in order to be lived, to be manifested. Peace has to emanate from within.

That's what we're doing here. We're cultivating that peace so each of us, and together, we become an oasis of peace. It's the most profound thing we can give the world--a sense of peace.

It's summertime. So, I thought today, we'd just do a brief review of themes we've been going through since Easter and into Pentecost. Just a few.

"For freedom Christ has set us free." There it is, another core teaching of the Gospel. *'If there ain't no freedom, don't bother'*, alright? All those religious obligations, all those ways you've been trying so hard to become a faithful Christian--forget it. Just become free.

Sound good? Freedom terrifies us, doesn't? It sounds so good. But really, I don't know if we want to go there because the fulfillment of freedom is love--not just the affection for others, the caring, the compassion for others. Love is that connection which leads to community, to creativity, and to joy.

Now, we don't have to be joyful all the time. That's too much. But if there is no joy, what is going on? What is going on, if there is nothing that sparks us? That's not religious, that's a version of hell! Where's the joy?

And that leads us to a sense of wholeness then. Both within, becoming whole ourselves--wholeness and relationship, wholeness with community, and with others. That's the nurturing way of Christ. That's what the gospel is about. It's always attractive. It's always fascinating. It always brings together, and anything which is fragmenting people is not the Gospel.

We are really hoping and praying that Fitbit's will save our lives, aren't we?

'How am I doing? [checks Fitbit] Oh! I'm off! So, I got to get better right now. I'm gonna fix it now!' As if we didn't have enough to jumble our brains!

Is it easy? Is it drawing us? Is it leading to joy? Where's the wholeness?

That's where the whole of creation is going. That's where evolution is leading. This is the secret unveiled for the ages--is that our destiny is personal love in unity.

So another one is *eco-awareness-friendliness*, because if we do not care for and love and protect the earth, it will not love protect and care for us and future generations. We are of the earth. As Kurt Vonnegut said, "We are mud that sat up." But, we also have consciousness so that we can care--and we need to exercise it.

Another one is *Justice*.

Throughout the entire history of humanity, do you know that there's not one person who said, *'I would like to be your subject.'*

'I want to be your slave.'

'I would like to be your inferior.'

Not one. Because to do that requires violence, and that's why it's always wrong.

That's one of the things wrong with this new [Supreme Court] decision about Roe [i.e. Roe vs Wade]. Terrible complexities in abortion, absolutely. But to say to all women,

'You are now inferior, once again.'

Men, congratulations. We're back on top.'

The ignorance, right? is overwhelming, but that's always part of the dominant class, so we don't have to see.

Our friend Isabel Wilkerson, in this book, Caste, has captured this in a wonderful little phrase. It's been around for a long time, but here it is:

"Evil asks little of the dominant caste other than to sit back and do nothing."

Evil asks little of the dominant caste other than to sit back and do nothing. In the days of apartheid, the white racist government would pay black clergy triple their salaries--*'if you just say nothing'*. That is sweet. *"If you asked me to say something contrary, that's hard, but to pay me to say nothing... whew!"*

Evil....All that evil needs from bystanders is their silent complicity in the evil committed on their behalf--though a caste system will protect and perhaps even reward those who deign to join in the terror. It's a message for our times. *We dare not remain silent.*

This is what Paul is speaking about: 'I've been crucified to Christ. I've been crucified to the world, and the world has been crucified to me.' We are here participating in that crucifixion to bring resurrection. That's why we're gathering.

Another key theme element is that of the *Trinity*.

A couple years ago, I was co-leading an interfaith retreat, and a Muslim scholar engaged me in conversation. She said, 'You guys really aren't into that Trinity thing anymore, are you?' And I said to her, 'Oh my, it's just beginning in the Christian community. It's just beginning.'

Each of us is a trinity. You know that, right? We have all of these hidden dimensions of who we are. We're still trying to understand and explore what it means--even after decades on the planet. And then we're trying to manifest our best qualities of those things we love.?? And you know, we do pretty well. Yeah. Pretty well. And, we also need inspiration and energy to keep going, to be renewed. Without that energy and inspiration, again, there's no joy.

Well, the same of God, the Hidden One, generating life in endless generosity, blessing all that there is. How can it be, friends, after as miserable as life has become, that we're still happy to wake up today?

'Morning has broken like the first morning.' There's never been a day like this before--we're alive. Should we go out and do cartwheels along the highway? We're here. We are. We're breathing. My goodness.

What did you do to deserve today? Go ahead and testify. Tell me all the good stuff about 'I deserve it.!!' Don't we live in a superficial time? Mercy.

And so, Jesus is all about the work of revealing this hidden God--drawing out the outrageous compassion of the one who doesn't quit on us ever, who invites us to practice the same kind of unending mercy, who has care for the little ones, the small, those which just don't count. These matter to God like the hairs on our head.

And then, the Holy Spirit, generating enthusiasm, insight, enlightenment, inspiration, energy, joy--because we don't have it, do we? Yeah. Yeah. This is the One we need.

We're growing into that Trinity, we are inside the life of the Trinity. Hmm, and that's why then, finally, contemplation is so important in our times. In fact, it's been said, 'Contemplation is the future.' If we are not nurturing our relationship with the living presence of the One who has bestowed life upon us, we soon not only wander away from God, we lose ourselves. Have you ever noticed that? We just drift off. So hard.

So this intentional nurturing, whether it's through stillness, and music, the arts, silence, nature, Eucharist, prayer, Psalms, community..oohh. Be sure to be renewing that within yourself. Constantly, constantly make it a priority. It has to become a priority for us. There's no way to peace. There's no way to get there. Peace is the way.

I'm extremely thankful for Jesus' honesty in the Gospel for today. I don't know about another single spiritual teacher who has ever been this honest to say, 'I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves'... [who are] ready to devour life, they want to feed on it and tear it up.

We have been called to live as disarmed people, with open and generous hearts. Oh yeah, there's no other way. Peace is the way.

Just hear again, these marvelous Beatitudes. These are not little things to think on--these are cosmic truths which are trying to plant themselves deep inside of us.

Blessed are those who know their needs--their emptiness, theirs is the grace of heaven.

Blessed are those who weep and mourn, their tears shall be transformed to healing.

Blessed are the humble, they are very close to this sacred earth.

Blessed are those who hunger for earth's oneness, they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the forgiving, they are free. They're free!

Blessed are the clear in heart, they shall see the living presence.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are birthed of God--and they are birthing God.

[translation from Praying with the Earth by John Newell]

There is no way to peace. Peace is the way. Peace is the way.
It's our mantra.

Fortunately, Jesus also gives us a little bit later in The Sermon on the Mount--the Lord's Prayer. Here's the finest vehicle for reconnecting on a daily and regular basis. So I'd like to share just once more, ever so briefly, our Abba-Imma, Chi Kung Lord's Prayer. Now, I understand it's not everybody's favorite. That's okay, but it does speak to some people. And you need to know, Kaleo and Elise, they've been teaching it at Acalanes Adult Education now for 34 years. Every retreat they go to, they teach it. They've been teaching it in Mexico. I've taught it to 100 rabbis at one time. It is being used in universities in Connecticut and Georgia. I teach it at interfaith retreats. People say thank you.

So, you don't have to like it, but don't pretend it's not happening and evolving. So first, I'm just going to have you sit there and do minimal actions, but it's this way of embodying. That's the gift of this Chi Kung, putting us in our whole being

So, *Abba*--feel it in the palms of your hand as if you were outside with the sun pouring into your hands,

Imma is that circle in front of you, drawing everything together in the universe, the whole Cosmos coming together. This is the feminine, bringing it all together—

in heaven. Just drop your hands in front of you. Look at your hands, you know, we're already in heaven. There's no way to peace. Peace is the way--you're already in heaven.

Holy be your name--just be in the presence, the ineffable mystery.

Holy be your name.

And then a triangle in front of your heart (the triangle is a symbol of focus and stability).
Your reign come (Another translation I'm enjoying is "*Your illumination ignite.*")
Invite that energy of the Spirit to come into our hearts deep within. Just permeate, penetrate us.
Your reign come, (and then),
Your yearning be done.
Think of your whole body as a tree rooted in the whole earth.
Your yearning be done on earth, in the sacred being that I am, *as it is in heaven.*
Give us this day the bread we need.
Again, the triangle over the gut. It is not a disappointment to God, that we are creatures of need.
We need so many things to survive.
Give us this day the bread we need.
And then *Forgive us our wrongs*. We point back to the kidneys, liver, stomach--all the organs in back here. This is where (in Chi Kung), we hold not only tension, but fear, anxiety, negativity, all the destructive toxins. This is where spiritual cholesterol gathers. And boy, do we like to hang on to it! So, we're pointing here.

Forgive us our wrongs the acknowledgement, and then releasing
as we forgive those who wrong us. That takes a lot of practice.
Ahhh... And we just heard, those who forgive are... free.
Forgive us our wrongs as we forgive those who wrong us.

Guide us through life's trials.
You just open the arms, the arms extending out from each side. *Guide us through life's trials.*
Don't overreach trying to do it. You're not trying to push it away. It's trying to create the breathing room. *Guide us through life's trials*--which is clearly the cross, right? Crucified to the world, the world crucified to me. And I think you can experience it. If you just open your arms, just up to feel how all that energy, relaxation here. It's...whew...

Shelter us all from evil.
Dear sheep among wolves--that's why we're praying this—
Shelter us all from evil.

In your grace, (again reaching to that sun) *in your wisdom*, at the forehead here,
and in your love, at the heart.
Now and forever. Again, back here, this solidifies it ??

'Amen' is releasing it to the earth.

Once more.

Abba-Imma in heaven.
Holy be your name.
Your reign come.

*Your yearning be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day the bread we need.
Forgive us our wrongs as we forgive those who wrong us.
Guide us through life's trials.
Shelter us all from evil.
In your grace, your wisdom, and in your love.
Now, and forever.
Amen.*

Amen.