

## The Miraculous Nature of Love

Welcome to the Mystic Heart!

Good morning, Mystic Heart. If you're new here this morning, I am Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director for Mystic Heart Spiritual Center, and I want to welcome you Home. **Song:** *Welcome to the Mystic Heart* (by Diana & Chris Johnson)

**Welcome and Opening Prayer by Lucinda Alton, RScP**

**Song:** *I'm Amazing* (by Keb' Mo') Chris Johnson

I want to thank you for being with us today...there are so many other things you could be doing on this beautiful Mother's Day. I appreciate that you have chosen to share your precious time with us. And I trust that it will bring something useful and uplifting that you can carry with you as you move into your week.

This is the first Mother's Day I have celebrated since my own mother made her transition last May 17. And I know that this is true for at least one of our other spiritual family members. And so, I wanted to make this service a special one, in honor of my mom, who almost lived long enough to watch me graduate Ministerial School. I know she was proud of me and that she is here with me today. And I want to honor all mothers everywhere, for the gift of life that they bring. And of course, we honor the Divine Mother...our beautiful planet Earth as she experiences this time of cleansing...of clearer skies and cleaner water that is resulting from our slowing down and finding Sanctuary at Home.

I began this week with a plan to talk about the Divine Feminine...it seemed to make sense as a Mother's Day Message. What is the Divine Feminine? It is the part of your consciousness responsible for nurturing, intuition, and empathy, regardless of your gender. The Divine Feminine is the aspect of every human that is associated with creation, community, feeling, and collaboration. Some of its traits are gentleness, empathy, humility, and sensitivity.

The Divine Feminine is an energy that has been with us since ancient times. Consciousness has these two aspects...the 'masculine' qualities and the 'feminine' qualities, and each of us has both and needs both to achieve our highest creative potential. And don't get me wrong...this *is* important to understand, especially as we live in relationship with ourselves and one another. But the topic left me empty. It wasn't mine to offer, at least not at this time. So, I asked myself, "What do you really want to talk about? What does God want to say through you?" Something that keeps coming up, in classes and other discussions this week is *Love as our Divine Nature...the Miraculous Nature of Love*. And being that this month's theme is *The Miraculous Nature of Everything*, that is what I would like to share with you today.

Love seems like an appropriate Mother's Day topic and it never hurts to be reminded...it is comforting to hear someone else say it, so breathe this in...*Your True Nature is Love*.

What do I mean by True Nature? From the Latin, the word *nature* means *essential qualities, innate disposition*. And from its Greek roots we get *the intrinsic characteristics that develop of their own accord*. Love is an essential quality...it is our innate disposition and an intrinsic characteristic that develops of its own accord. It's hard to believe that this is true sometimes when we look at the world around us. But it is the Spiritual Truth for each one of us.

I think we sometimes get confused when we hear that Love is our True Nature. Ernest Holmes, founder of the Science of Mind and Spirit, defines Love as "the self-givingness of Spirit through the desire of Life to express Itself in terms of creation...Love is a cosmic force whose sweep is irresistible...Love is free from condemnation, even as it is free from fear."

What does Holmes mean? Rather than thinking of Love as an emotional state, or a set of feelings and attachments, he defines Love as God's willingness to show up as all of creation...the Divine Impulse to come into being. So in these terms, Love is impartial just as Law is impartial. And because it is impartial, it is free from judgment, condemnation, and fear.

This is something we do not often talk about. We do talk about spiritual Principles like Cause and Effect, the Law of Correspondence, the Law of Faith as being impartial, and we understand that they work the same way for you as they do for me. But we don't often talk about the impartial nature of Love. The potential exists for each of us to discover Love within our own hearts and minds because Love is the Divine Impulse seeking to come into form according to its own desire to express Itself.

I want to be careful in not anthropomorphizing God. We say that God desires to express Itself. It is probably more accurate to say that expression is Its impulse. It cannot do anything else. But we do know that the form that God's expression takes seems to be influenced by our direction. Made in God's Image and Likeness, we were given the free will to create. And how do we create, directing the form Love takes? Through our thoughts, intentions, words, feelings, and actions. So Love can take the form of the most beautiful and pleasurable experiences, and Love can take the form of things we would rather not experience. It is impartial...not attached to what the form looks like.

We have all had enough lately of Love showing up in difficult ways. So, today I want to talk about how Love, working through you and me can be powerful and helpful and compassionate and wise...especially during times like these when it is so easy to become overwhelmed. I would like to share a story with you from the Christian New Testament.

So, Jesus's disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee on a boat. Some of them were fishermen and so they spent a lot of time on the water. Let me tell you a little bit about the Sea of Galilee. It is set in the hills of northern Israel, and is nearly 700 feet below sea level. It is nearly eight miles wide at its widest point, and more than 12 miles long from north to south. In places, the sea plunges to depths of 200 feet. The sea's location makes it subject to sudden and violent storms as the wind comes over the eastern mountains and drops suddenly onto

the sea. So with that said, as the disciples were sailing along, a storm suddenly arose. The wind began to blow and the waves tossed the little boat around. They began working together, one steering, and many scooping water from the floor of the boat, doing whatever they could to survive the raging storm. After some time goes by, they lose heart...they let the storm get into their heads and they panic.

Have you ever let the storm get into your head? The storm going on outside in the world, and you let it affect you on the inside? This can happen to me when I get busy looking at the world, spending lots of time focused on outer conditions...especially really difficult outer conditions. I see its chaos and it's very real... sometimes the thunderbolts and lightning...the viruses and murder hornets...can be very frightening because they're real, right? They're part of our experience. We are material beings and we have to live in the physical world. We don't walk through walls, at least I don't at this stage of my development. I use the doorways. I don't walk out into oncoming traffic. I wait for my turn to cross the street. I do what makes sense to my heart and mind as I move through the world.

Some of us have been studying a book called *SQ21: The 21 Skills of Spiritual Intelligence*. Author Cindy Wigglesworth defines Spiritual Intelligence this way: "Spiritual Intelligence is the ability to behave with wisdom and compassion while maintaining inner and outer peace regardless of the situation." I'm going to repeat that...the "Spiritual Intelligence is the ability to behave with wisdom and compassion while maintaining inner and outer peace *regardless of the situation.*"

It's almost as if she has studied the 17<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Saint, Francis de Sales. He said this: "Never be in a hurry. Do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset."

This is how you know you're dealing with Spiritual Truth...throughout time and cultures, it stays constant. It sounds very much the same.

So let me ask you a question...what do we do when we get upset? We lose our focus and we have to find our way back to the center of our Peace. In the story, the disciples do this metaphorically. We do what the disciples did. They went to look for their teacher. But when they find him sleeping soundly, his head on a little pillow, taking a nap, peacefully unaware of anything going on around him, in the middle of the storm, they become upset. And they wake the sleeping Jesus with these words... "Don't you even care that we are perishing?"

Have you ever wanted to ask that question? "Don't you even care that we are perishing?" Maybe to someone whose behavior doesn't appear to make sense to you...someone who doesn't seem concerned about what you are concerned about...someone whose inner peace seems undisturbed? It's tempting...maybe we're hoping that someone will have an answer, something that will lead me to the same kind of peace, something that will help me to know what is best to do.

So, when the teacher wakes up, he says, "Peace, be still." The exact text from the King James Bible says, "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." He rebuked the wind. The modern definition of *rebuke* is *an expression of sharp disapproval or criticism*. But the original definition from Middle English, and the meaning linked to the original translation from the Greek was to *force back, or repress*. By replacing the upset with *Peace, be still*, Jesus instantly replaced fear with Peace, and Love could show up as the calming of the storm.

Metaphorically, I think of the teacher as that infinite consciousness of Love within us that when awakened speaks with authority and says, "Peace, be still." This is a reminder to me that when the voice of the one eternal consciousness of Love within me is awakened, it says, "Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset." Not even for this storm you are currently in, no matter what it is. This is what my old friend John Hughes used to call hard scripture.

The truth is that for most of us, this particular storm is not that bad...most of them aren't, truth be told. We live in a beautiful place...we have plenty to eat and drink...we have a roof over our heads and plenty to keep our minds and hands busy. We have a supportive spiritual community, loving family and pets...it's just not that bad for us here.

The storm itself isn't that bad...it's the rumors, the fake news, the uncertainty, the conflicting information...it's the sense that a bigger storm may still be coming. Have you noticed that in our modern culture, with its endless exposure to media, there is always a sense that a bigger storm may still be coming? We become fearful and lose our peace. And then, when we see someone who seems peaceful and confident, we may get irritated, or even angry...just like the disciples did. We forget that even as we do whatever helps us feel safe, if we just stop focusing on the threat, and bring our attention to the Love within this precious moment...we would find peace. We can do this. *Peace, be still*. And the storm within us ceases and there comes a great calm. When the Love that we are is awakened, it has the power to heal and to connect us.

There is a presence in us, a creative intelligence in us, an infinite consciousness that we call God within and its nature is Love. This Presence is quietly and calmly at rest at the stern of the boat, at the very center of our consciousness. In the depth of our being, there is Something within every one of us that *is not* and *cannot be* touched by outer circumstances, no matter what storm we are currently traveling through. Some people call It the Lord, Infinite Presence, Divine Mother, Ground of All Being, intuition, God, or Love...and it has been said that when we take one step toward her, she takes 20 steps back towards us. The Love in us bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

When we use the words *God's Grace* or *God's Mercy*, this is what we are talking about...*God's Love*...God's impulse to take form in, through and AS each one of us...God's impartial nature that allows us to choose, and to choose again. And it willingly allows Itself to fill the mold we

create by our choices. And if we're paying attention, as we choose our way through life, we can hear a Voice within that says, "Be Still...do not lose your peace...even if your whole world around you is falling apart",

The 15<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic monk, Thomas a Kempis, speaks to the Lord of Love within with these words: "Lord God, thou holy lover of my soul, thou art my glory and the exultation of my heart...thou art my hope and refuge in the day of my trouble." How beautiful...how personal is his relationship with the Divine. Although It is impartial, it is important for us to think of the one consciousness within us as something intimate and warm, close and natural, kind of like a beloved friend that we carry within our own heart...Ernest Holmes called this friend "an Inner light, always present".

I have another question for us to consider. How might you and I treat each other if we knew that there was such a Presence in us and in the person we are speaking to and *about*? Would we be okay with speaking from anger, self-righteousness, spite, judgment or blame? Or would we allow our words to flow from our hearts, bringing our words back to the peace within, every time? Of course, this wouldn't end the need for sometimes having to have hard conversations about boundaries and agreements...we would still have to teach our children about appropriate choices and behaviors...our roles in the world might still lead us to have to create structure and consistency...but what would these conversations look and sound like, or more importantly, what would they feel like if we brought the Love within us awake and into the process? Here is the invitation today, for myself and for you...Be more like your true self. Speak, act, walk in the world in a way that is more like your True Self. Be more Loving.

So, I like to give homework, and I haven't been doing too much of that on Sundays lately. But:

- ☺ What if, in the coming week, each of us commits to praise people more than criticize them? Not only with our words, but with our thoughts? Or,
- ☺ What if we commit to treat people as if we really believe that within them is the spark of the Divine? Or,
- ☺ What if we commit to resolve conflicts in a way that shows that our true nature is Love? Or,
- ☺ What if we commit to communicating in a way that shows we believe in our true nature?

What gets in the way of making such commitments? What if I forget? What if I speak before I think? What if I can't be true to that commitment? We'll never know if we don't try. So what...what if we do forget? What would love do then? Forgive and gently start again.

The Catholic Saint that I quoted a few moments ago...Francis la Sales...had some more wisdom to offer: "If the heart wanders and is distracted, bring it back to the point quite gently and replace it tenderly in its master's presence. And even if you did nothing else but bring

your heart back over and over, and place it again and again in our Lord's presence, though it went away every time, and you brought it back again, still your time would be very well used."

Whatever the storm we may find ourselves in, let us practice bringing our hearts back to Love. Let's pray...

**Song:** What Would Love Do Now? (Eddie Watkins, Jr.) Chris Johnson

### **Closing Prayer**

**Offertory – Feel free to get online and make an offering via PayPal or Visa on our website, or send a check via snail mail to the Mystic Heart Gathering Place. We are so grateful for your ongoing support. Please hold your hand to your heart as I speak our affirmation:**

As I awaken to the God within me and all around me, I see Abundance everywhere I look. I consciously step into that flow of Abundance by this act of giving. I bless this gift, sending it forth to heal and prosper. It is evidence of my deep faith. It does good work in the world and blesses all of Creation. I give from a consciousness of Abundance! And so it is! Amen!

**Video: *Grateful*** (by Daniel Nahmod and Nimo Patel)

### **Blessing for the Offering**

### **Invitations**

**Closing Song:** *Love Be With You* (Gary Lynn Floyd) Diana & Chris Johnson