

Celebration Sunday: June 14, 2020 Joyful Expression of Grace

Good morning. If you have been attending our services, you know that our theme for the month of June is *Joyful Expression*. I am not talking about Joy as an exuberant happiness...that's more of an emotion. I'm talking about Joy as a quality of God, as a Spiritual Truth, as the deep and abiding sense that all is exactly as it is supposed to be, that ultimately, Infinite Intelligence is using all for Good, no matter what it looks like to us. Last week I called it Contentment...And in times like these, this can be a challenging concept to hold...it can be a difficult place to live from.

This morning, we are giving particular attention to *The Joyful Expression of Grace*. Take a moment to think about Grace...what is it? Do you believe there is such a thing? There are a number of ways to think about Grace.

An old-fashioned definition might be that Grace is a special gift, bestowed on a particular person for no particular reason other than the God in the sky *wants to* bestow a gift upon us. That's the definition I learned and believed as a child. That's not how I see Grace anymore. That's probably not how you see Grace, either.

We talk about graceful dancers and other athletes, how they make their art form look easy, effortless...how they seem to move into the flow, to be carried along by something not of their own making.

A modern definition of Grace might be: Smoothness and elegance of movement; courteous good will; bringing honor or credit to someone; (legal) a reprise or a waving of penalty.

But we're looking at something much bigger than that, something much more profound and impactful. We are talking about a more metaphysical, even mystical meaning. We're talking about Grace as a radical, transformative energy that has no sense of duality. Grace is the activity of Divine Intelligence, the free flow of Life, removing the obstacles, or moving us around them, like water flowing downstream...and we can experience Grace when we enter Its flow; when we surrender to It, It carries us along.

And entering the flow of Grace happens in the heart, not the head. Maybe that's why we have so much trouble with the concept of Grace. It is not made of words, It happens in the space between our thoughts. Grace is the wisdom that flows through us when we stop thinking.

Benedictine monk, Brother David Steindl-Rast, says that a bird is graceful always "because it doesn't think. A dancer is graceful only when she stops thinking..."

Grace is such a religious word...sometimes it is difficult to disconnect it from all the associations I have built through my conditioning. Sometimes looking at the idea of Grace triggers me...it might bring up my worthiness issues when I slip back into the idea of needing to deserve God's Grace.

We have studied Spiritual Truth for long enough to know that Karmic Universal Law, or the Law of Cause and Effect, is in operation. What happens if I have not always been so loving? What if I have tended toward judgment and criticism? And what about all of those unconscious things I did in my 20's? Won't I deserve something less than God's Grace?

See, I tend to make God into *my* own image, instead of remembering that I Am made in *Its* image. God doesn't judge, I do. The Infinite Intelligence of the Universe is impartial. It has no opinion, no judgment of anything I have done. It says, always and forever, "You are my Beloved in whom I Am Well pleased." Grace loves all without conditions.

I, on the other hand, am a spiritual being living a physical life. My human nature resists the idea of Grace because Grace has no sense of duality, no acknowledgment of right or wrong. As a strictly human being, I have no personal frame of reference for this. And even once I have started consciously walking the spiritual path, and holding myself to be both human and Divine, I have to admit...I still tend toward blame, criticism and judgment, of myself and others. This is partly because the human brain is designed to sort and analyze...and the human ego is there to protect me. And so it divides everything up into categories, it separates me from you, us from them, to keep me safe.

I can become blinded by categories and language born of the ego. Language is made up of words which are bound to become problematic because they are symbols, meant to label and categorize things. And the purpose of a label is to distinguish one thing from another, to point out differences.

Unfortunately, our media uses impactful words and pictures to further draw lines between us. And we can become addicted to the drama of separation, to the flow of adrenaline that courses through our veins, as we witness some of what is unfolding in our world. Right now, it seems like everywhere we look there is division. The human as one life form and the virus as its adversary...the protestors and the police...the black and the white...the haves and the have-nots...

It feels like the entire world is in discontent, embroiled in a raging battle of some kind. But we can only have a battle if there are two sides. All of the media narratives ask us to take sides. Everyone wants to be on the side of virtue, of what is right...no matter which

side we are on. We all mean well...we think we're on the right sight...if only we could see that there are no sides in a Unity. And our Principles, the mystics of the ages, and now quantum physics are all telling us that each of us...with no exceptions...is an irreplaceable part of One Whole, of One Wholeness, of One Holiness. This is what we are here to remember this morning. We are here to consider the transformative power of Grace.

What kind of Grace will it take to bring humanity to a place where we recognize our Oneness? What kind of Grace?

Embedded Music: David Roth – *That Kind of Grace*

And so, as Fr. Richard Rohr explains: At this compelling time in human history, “We are being called to look at our shadows, our stories. If they are not pure, they are exerting their power, their darkness, over us.” Only by shining Light on the shadow and redeeming it by our Love can we be absolved. He goes on to say that “The goodness of God fills all the gaps of the Universe without discrimination or preference. Our self-righteousness locks us into the battle between light and dark in us. That doesn't come from God, from Grace. It comes from us...We just have to stand in the stream of Grace and first, experience, and then radiate unconditional Love.”

Grace is a radical energy, an extreme energy, and the only thing that will take us to a better future...have you ever heard the phrase *it will be our saving Grace*? Grace is unconditional Love and It lifts our burden of having to prove ourselves, of having to be in the right camp.

Grace is the Christ Energy that is alive within each one of us...it is the very Atmosphere in which we live, move, and have our being. When I surrender to Grace, It can lead me to silence, to quiet, to reflection so that I may come to know Its Presence.

In helping to make the world a more peaceful and compassionate place, my primary duty is to surrender to Grace, to let go of my self-righteousness and receive Grace. In the process of surrender, I Am released from my own categories...this is absolute Freedom...this is the contentment I spoke of last week.

It is not to say that I don't have physical actions to take in the world...of course I do. But when I take those actions from a place of surrender to what is mine to do...when I take those actions from a state of complete willingness, I Am strengthened and my work in the world is potent and impactful.

Each of us is being given an opportunity to really look at all the things we have built our lives and our values on. Today's situation is much bigger than race relations, or political

power structures, or economics...although these are important pieces. These are taking us to the tipping point, and I have to admit that personally, it can be a little bit daunting, a little bit frightening. I am being asked to go deep...to question whether I am actually a kind and compassionate person. I am being asked to question how I walk through the world. Am I a beneficial presence on the planet? Do I know that we are all absolutely equal, and do I treat other beings as my equals? And what about Mother Earth? Am I doing all I can to walk lightly on her beautiful presence? Where can I do a little bit more to ensure that our children, and our children's children have a more peaceful, loving, and compassionate experience, where all work as one for the good of all? These are big questions...deep work that we are Called to.

It is possible. I know in every fiber of my being that it is possible to make the kind of responsible decisions and powerful changes that are needed at this time in our history. This wouldn't be the first time that human beings affected massive change. That is what we are here for...we are Practicing the Possible through Prayer...and compassionate conversation...and informed action. We are Artists of Possibility...co-creating whatever comes next. In the image and likeness of God. We are that powerful, because the Power of Spirit moves through us.

Did you know that the song *Amazing Grace* was written by a slave trader named John Newton? He had a conversion experience, and yet he continued in his line of business until about 30 years later, when he finally renounced his trade and made amends to the best of his ability. This is one simple example of how change happens, one person at a time, one decision at a time, one action at a time. Patience is called for, and dedication. As each of us does our own internal work, and then allows Grace to guide us in the world, we will create a third way...not this way or that way...not this camp or that camp. Grace is the way of neutrality, the way of Unity Consciousness, of Christ Consciousness.

Grace leads to powerful transformation. Should we choose the way of Grace, Its energy will propel us forward on our journey as a human family...towards unity, where the fighting stops and we work cooperatively in the co-creation of a more peaceful and compassionate world, to a healthier way of being and living.

Grace is bringing us always to see ourselves for who we really are...the Divine...All One. The most Graceful response to all that is occurring today is Love, patience, gentleness, and compassion...it is to trust that there is a Divine Spark in every person, even those involved in conflict...and it is to allow the Joy that is inherent within us to bubble up, even here, even now, even in the midst of all of it. And as we express our Joy, our Freedom, our Contentment, we are planting seeds of faith for our future.

Let's take a moment now to sit in the energy of Grace...

Closing Prayer

Closing Song

Piplika... <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCx1aVI6TbZjk4zGREqSRAhg>

Prayers from the Cosmos...