

Message: *The Infinite and the Eternal lives in and through us, and loves us as we love what is Finite and Mortal.*

Greeting:

I open worship today with these words from Carl Sagan:

Look again at that pale blue dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar", every "supreme leader", every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there — on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

In all the vastness of time and space we find ourselves here together this morning. Valentines Day is coming, and I would like to tell a love story, about Love as big as the cosmos and as small as brushing our teeth, making food for friends, or easing the burden of someone we love. Love as little as right now and as huge as all time.

First Hymn: Eternal and Infinite Source of All Grace, Green 27

Readings:

William Blake: Excerpt from Auguries of Innocence

*To see a world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour...*

2 Corinthians 12:9

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Luke 16:10

The One who is faithful in little, is faithful in much.

1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Second Hymn --- The Lone Wild Bird, Green 240

Joys and Concerns

Musical Interlude

Prayer:

Let Us Open our hearts to the Eternal Presence and Silence, and Pray together. Holy One, You Who Are, we come to you today with love that is human. One of Your Great teachers, Jesus of Nazareth, told us that the whole of the Law of Creation is love -- Love for You, and Love for Each Other. Our love sometimes gets tired, it gets weary, we get worn. It can sometimes seem that the most simple things are so very hard. Be Thou Our Vision, O God of all Time. In Our Time, in Our Days....we can feel so small and the days so long. We can offer you only ourselves, please Great Spirit come and rest in us, let us know your love and enduring Presence always and ever within us, that we might rest in you. Glory Be to You, the One Who Loves. Glory Be to the Beloved, All of Your Creation, Glory Be to Love, In all Things. As it was in the Beginning, Is Now, and Ever Shall Be, World Without End, Amen.

Third Hymn: Simple Gifts, Green 271, two verses with second verse on benches

(This is the time when any children present in our meeting are invited to go downstairs for fellowship.)

Message: What is Eternal and Infinite Lives in Us and Through Us, and Loves Us as We Love What is Mortal.

Fourth Hymn: Kum Bah Yah, Blue 52

Benediction

Glory Be.

Glory Be to The One Who Loves All.

Glory Be.

Glory Be to the Beloved, All of Creation, Everyone here on this Pale Blue Dot.

Glory Be.

Glory Be to Love.

Glory Be.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Message:

When I was about six years old, about the age my son Cyrus is now, I began to contemplate and become very anxious about eternity and infinity. I remember very vividly lying in bed, thinking about eternity -- a time that went on and on, and infinity -- space that went on and on. It was so vast. So very much bigger than me. Contemplating eternity meant contemplating my own death, and questions like "would I know I was dead?" and also questions about the reality of heaven, which to me seemed like both a promise and a threat, because it went on forever. Even if heaven was a good thing, the eternality part of the equation induced a feeling almost like panic...the on and on and on quality was so much larger than my six year old brain could fathom. And so I would either have inchoate feelings of panic that I couldn't explain to my long suffering parents, or I would fall asleep and have inchoate dreams that I just remember now as huge mountainous blobs smothering and suffocating me. Eternity. Infinity.

35 years after I first felt the reaches of eternity and infinity, that reality is still bigger than my brain can fathom, but my faith and practice now let me feel mostly comforted and held by what is eternal and infinite, rather than panicked. And this is because I have come to believe in love. I know that The Universe and Our Place in It is a big topic for worship, but I can boil it down to one word, and it is Love.

In the mystery through which we travel and are set down here, it is love that tethers us to this place and time, and this place and time that tether us to all of time and space. Love of people, love of home, love of life, love of the exuberant, lavish generosity of aliveness. This time and this space are what bind us to eternity and infinity. Through love of here and now. I think the vastness that gives birth to us and embraces us when we die is contained and expressed and distilled in its essence in the smallness and preciousness of everything here that I know and love on Earth. It is a Holy Paradox. It is opposites in motion. It is a love story.

When I was pregnant with my son Cyrus, those dark and silent winter nights would hold this thought: that growing in my body was the beginning of a life that would one day come to an end. Contained in me was this mystery of thousands of moments not yet lived, and also the certainty of this not yet born person's eventual death. It was as if all time was condensed there, within me : a life to come, in the world yet to be.

As my children have grown there have been moments when I can still see in them the newborn, the six-month old, the toddler that they were. And in a certain tilt of the head in concentration, or the way they explain something to me, I can sometimes see the teenager, taller than me, that I will one day negotiate with, the young person who will charge out into the world, away from me, the grown man, and even, some moments, the elder, who will be here after I am gone. Sometimes in the faces of my beloved boys, I imagine I can catch a glimpse of what was, what is, and what shall be, all there at once in this person precious to me.

In the nursing home where I work I see this fullness of time happening in reverse when adult children of residents come to visit their parents. As they bend to kiss or hug their mother or father in greeting, it is as if for a moment a veil between this present moment and all the moments that hold it lifts, and I imagine that I can see

that younger parent leaning over to kiss the small boy, the older parent confronting the teenager coming home late, the still older parent becoming a grandparent, and so on, until this moment, when the parent is in a wheelchair, has suffered a stroke, or can not respond, as their now grown child stoops to kiss them upon the cheek, in a fulfillment of what has gone before.

It is like this with the people we are given to walk our journeys with here, to share time with, to love. Sometimes when we see them through the eyes of love, we can see them as they are now, we can catch glimpses of who they have been, and possibilities of who they may become. Looking at your beloved wife or husband of many years, one moment can contain the whole story of its past and the seed of its future, the young person we fell in love with, the elder they are becoming.

So it is, I think, with The Eternal and Infinite Source of All Grace - the Silence we might call God, Presence, Spirit - we use many names for what holds us, for Love. I think This is how it is with God and God's Creation. What is eternal and infinite and present in and through all things -- witnesses us the way we see our beloved people. This is how we are moored, an anchor of love. The ground of our arising, being and becoming -- Loves us, and sees in this moment, every moment, our transformation over time, in time, through time. In each of our beloved faces, the whole of this pale blue dot, A fullness of what we have been, what we are, what we might yet become, what we are becoming.-- all there at once, secure in eternity, held in infinity, beheld with love.

In this realm of change, of living and dying, of time within time, loving what is mortal is a fearsome and dangerous thing. Here where we live, what we love is certain to change, to grow up, to grow old, to grow frail, to die. To love at all, as mortal breakable beings, what is mortal and breakable is to commit ourselves to the certainty of loss. I think we are all very brave.

I also think that it seems to be the way God works. It is through loving what is mortal and changeable and here in this life, place and time that we can experience the love at the heart of existence, a love from which we come and to which we return. This kind of paradox -- that what is mortal and finite bears what is eternal and infinite, and what is eternal and infinite bears what is mortal and finite, is the

kind of paradox that is scattered like riddles throughout the Bible. Like (Luke 16:10) “he who is faithful in little, is faithful in much” and “grace as a power made perfect in weakness.” like the passage from William Blake, there is a pattern of paradoxes throughout scripture that point us to a love that is found there where opposites converge, or dualisms meet...through what is broken and breakable we find what is unbreakable...through vulnerability comes a strength beyond imagining, through what is meek a power greater than anything we can fathom, through what is little, much, through loss, what can never be lost, through death, eternal life.

So it is that we are loved by the Holy Mystery, and we love the Holy Mystery in return: by living and loving and being what is mortal, particular, That of God in the act of becoming, in time, through time.

In all of time we are in this time. In all of space, we are in this space. This is the place where faith matters. This is the place where love acts. This is the place where we reach for God, and God reaches back. It is a great love story.

The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof
Its streets, its slums, as well as stars above
Salvation is here, where we laugh, where we cry
Where we seek and love, where we live and die.

When true Liberty is found
By fear and by hate we will no more be bound
In love and in life we will find a new birth
And in Peace and in freedom redeem the earth.

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