

October 11, 2015
Telling The Truth

Musical Prelude

Greeting: Grace Lee Boggs: stretching our humanity, finding our soul

First Hymn: How Great Thou Art, Green 8

Readings: Ephesians 4:25, Mother Theresa, Hafiz excerpt, John 8:31

Second Hymn: Peace is Flowing Like a River, Green 318

Joys and Concerns

Musical Interlude

Prayer

Third Hymn: Kum Ba Yah, Blue 52

Message: Telling the Truth

Silent Worship

Fourth Hymn: Peace Like a River, Blue 42

Benediction: A River That Carries Us All

Afterthoughts/Introductions/Announcements

Musical Postlude

Welcome

Good morning Friends. This week marked the passing of American activist Grace Lee Boggs. Born in Rhode Island in 1915 to Chinese immigrant parents, she was deeply involved with the civil rights, labor, and environmental justice movements. She died on Monday, at the age of 100. On the radio, Grace's caregiver said that in her last days, Grace still wanted to talk about what it means to be a human being, to stretch one's humanity.

In 2013, at the age of 98, Grace Lee Boggs said these words in an interview: "...the American people are very needy...They need to know that a revolution is to advance their humanity and to advance the humanity of the human race. They need to know that a revolution is to create solutions...They need to know that a revolution is not just protests, it's not just anger, it's not just a search for power. It's a search ...for how to be a human being. And I think that's what's unique ... about this country, because even though there is a lot of poverty, there's a lot of inequality, there are a lot of physical hardships, I think the most profound hardship of the American people is that they want to change, they want to change themselves, they want to change this world, and they don't know how to do it. And revolution is the way to do it, but not the old kind of revolution. ...this country is in such deep trouble spiritually, in every human sense. It's not just the finances. It's not just the joblessness... in the United States it's something that's a hunger, that's much deeper...we have to find our souls."

Let us for a moment this morning, take up that search for our souls together. And begin by singing.

First Hymn: *How Great Thou Art*, Green 8

Readings

Ephesians 4:25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another, one body in Christ.

Mother Teresa on Peace

Today, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten the truth that we belong to each other -- that man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister. If everyone could see the image of God in his neighbor, do you think we would still need tanks and generals?

Hafiz

I have come into this world to see this:
the sword drop from men's hands even at the height of their arc of anger
Because we have finally realized there is just one flesh to wound and it is His --
The Christ's...

I have come into this world to see this: all creatures hold hands as we pass through this miraculous existence we share on the way to even a greater being of soul, a Being of just ecstatic light, forever entwined... with Christ.

John 8:32

³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Second Hymn *Peace is Flowing Like a River, Green 318*

Joys and Concerns

Prayer

Holy God, You who carry us, You who are carried by Us, cause us to hear your voice. Speak a word to us. Tell us The Truth. We long to be set free. Sometimes we are not sure how to be human, how to stretch ourselves, where to find our souls...how to reach for you...how to reach out for our brothers and sisters...sometimes it feels we are always looking for you...everywhere...in everyone we see. sometimes we see a weary world looking back at us. sometimes we feel weary. So speak a word to us today, dear God. Tell us the Truth, a small truth, a quiet truth...that we might be set free.

Third Hymn: *Kum Ba Yah, Blue 52*

Message: *Telling The Truth.*

Silent Worship

Fourth Hymn: *Peace Like a River, Blue 42*

Benediction:

Let us go forward from this place and Tell the Truth that Shall Set Us Free:
We belong to one another,
There is only one flesh to wound,
That is how we stretch our humanity
That is how we make peace in our souls,
Peace Like a River that carries us all.

Message

The other day, my son Cyrus came downstairs first thing in the morning and he declared that his friend Xavier in his second grade class gets \$1 per tooth from the Tooth Fairy, and this caused Cyrus to question why his teeth were only worth 50 cents each. He tried to corner me with his gaze as I moved around the kitchen

making lunches and breakfast and he said forcefully, “Mommy, tell The Truth. Do you put that money under my pillow? Tell The Truth.” “Tell The Truth” he repeated, several times, with significance, as if capitalizing The Truth.

I admit that his command caught me off guard, and I got a butterflies in my stomach. I was unprepared, at seven in the morning, to tell the ‘Big T’ Truth.

I want to tell The Truth, in word, in deed, and in my life. But in this case, in many cases, Truth is complex, and multi-layered. It can even contain seeming contradictions. There is literal, factual truth, and there is deep, metaphorical truth. There is the truth found in myth, poetry, story, and song: fictional stories that tell a profound universal truth. There are feelings that are true to the one feeling them, even as they are the opposite of what someone else may be feeling and experiencing in the same situation. There is choosing to withhold brutal honesty or the unvarnished truth out of a desire to be kind or compassionate. There are facts that can be measured and quantified and confirmed and then there are things we know to be true, like love, that we can not measure or verify. There are many kinds of truth.

And then there are facts that betray the spiritual truth of our interdependence, that betray the soul connection we naturally feel for our brothers and sisters. there are facts that forsake the ecological truth of Creation’s interconnectedness. It is true that fairly often people fail to see, as Mother Theresa says, the image of God in their neighbor, or as we would say That of God in this world around them. The result has been the spiritual sickness that Grace Lee Boggs alluded to, the consequence of which is horrendous truths that I am not ready to tell my children, and that they are not ready to hear. Not facts about the Tooth Fairy, the truth of which is one of those multi-layered things that contain magic and myth, and wishful thinking and childhood rites of passage, but facts like more Americans have died from guns since 1968 than all of the combined casualties of all of our wars since the American Revolution. Facts like there is scientific consensus that we’re currently experiencing the worst spate of species die-offs since the loss of the dinosaurs, and unlike that wave of extinction, this one is almost certainly caused almost entirely by the actions of one species. For Cyrus the Columbus Day holiday that we celebrate tomorrow has brought consternation about the truth of

what was done to eradicate Native American culture on this continent and he can't understand why more adults do not continue to be upset by that.

So when Cyrus said Tell the Truth, I found myself thinking of all of those things, and of what Mother Theresa said about peace, and about our belonging to one another, and about how the Tooth Fairy keeps hold of the parts of ourselves that we lose on the way to growing up. The way we adults integrate and learn to live with some commonplace horrible truths.

The Truth that morning with Cyrus looking at me significantly, seemed at that moment too enormous to grasp, impossible to tell. And it often is. I turn down the radio in the car when news about Syria comes on, or ISIS, or the latest coverage of the latest mass shooting. And if I don't catch it soon enough one of my boys will swiftly note "that just said 9 people were killed" or they will ask "what is a chemical weapon?" or "what does beheading mean?" Telling the truth in those moments means deftly saying something that is developmentally appropriate for a four and seven year old in a world of truths that are not developmentally appropriate for the souls of anyone.

So what, in this bruised and hurting world, on this magnificently beautiful fall day, in this spiritually struggling country, where children still want to believe in the Tooth Fairy and parents still want to hold onto magic, is the truth that stretches our humanity, that leads us to find our lost souls, that sets us free?

I think it is the one that Grace Lee Boggs, Mother Theresa, Hafiz, and Jesus all agree on: The measure of our humanity is found in how we treat one another, in whether we understand that all parts matter in this body we form together. "if you continue in my word, then you are truly my disciples." those are the words that come before "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." In our heritage, we are disciples of a practical Jesus, and his word directed us to care for the outcast, for the person who is difficult to love, for the sick, for the hungry, for the homeless, the least, the disinherited, the prisoner. That Jesus who calls us to stretch our humanity and find our souls in connection to one another. At the same time, we are worshippers of a mystical Christ. That mystery of the soul that we lean into, that also calls us to stretch ourselves, out beyond what we can verify

and know for sure. In our tradition, we follow the example of the practical Jesus and we place our faith in the mystical Christ. This is our faith and our practice.

And this is the truth than can set us free. This faith, and this practice, together.

Father Richard Rohr, a Franciscan monk and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in New Mexico -- which bears witness to the wisdom of Christian mysticism -- teaches students in his Living School about what has been called The Perennial Tradition. His website says that The Perennial Tradition encompasses the recurring themes in all of the world's religions and philosophies that continue to say three key things:

1. There is a Divine Reality underneath and inherent in the world of things. What Quakers would call That of God.
2. There is in the human soul a natural capacity, similarity, and longing for this Divine Reality.
3. The final goal of existence is union with this Divine Reality.”

Tell the Truth my son said. Well I think the truth that set us free is this: we come from God and to God we return. we belong to one another. We are of one Body. There is only one flesh to wound. To know that, is to stretch one's humanity. It is to find our soul -- that essential thing that America longs for and hungers after. That's the Big T Truth.

I have come into this world to see this: all creatures hold hands as we pass through this miraculous existence we share on the way to even a greater being of soul, a Being of just ecstatic light, forever entwined... with Christ.

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.